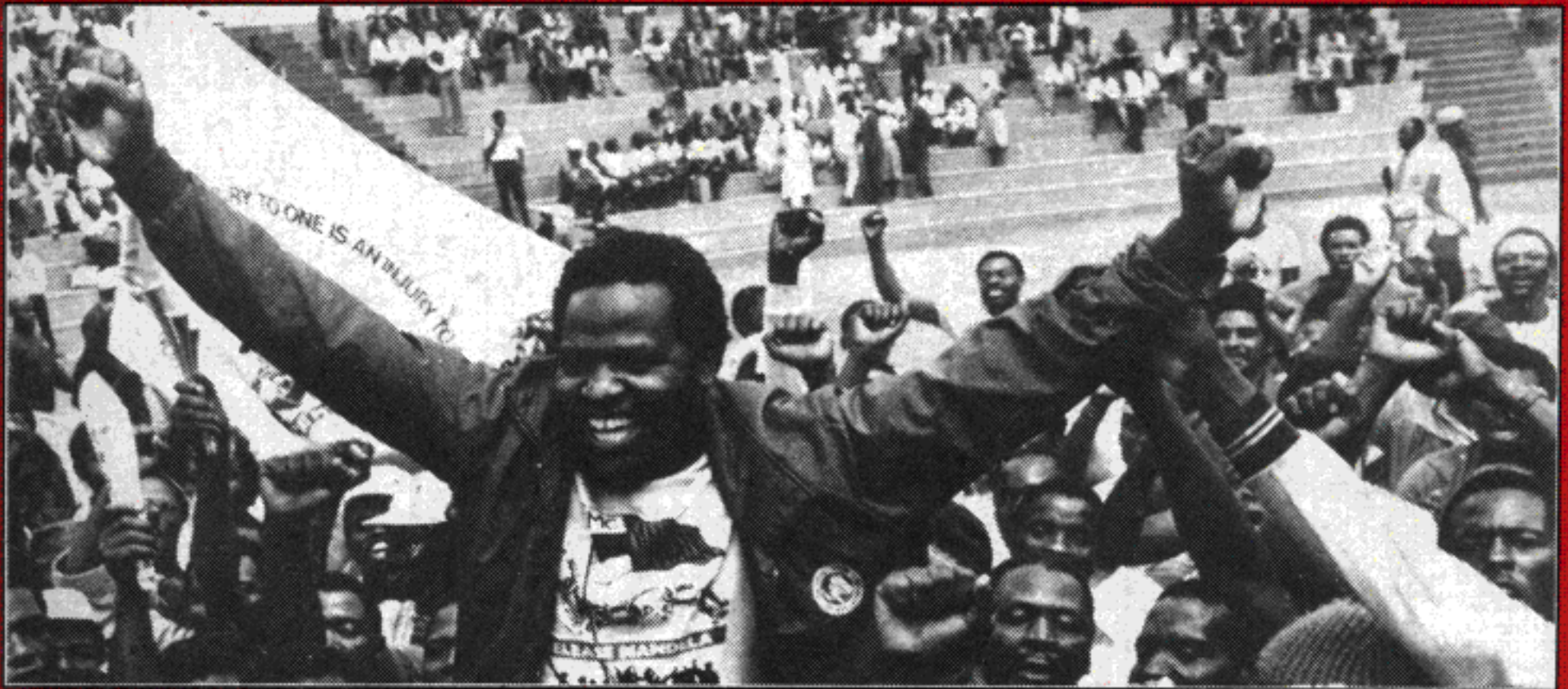


South African

LABOUR BULLETIN

June 1989 Volume 14 Number 2

Focus: unions and politics



NUM's James Motlatsi



NUMSA's Moses Mayekiso

The South African Labour Bulletin

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South African

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Editorial notes

This is a period of great upheaval in world socialism. It is a period of change, of struggle, of criticism and self-criticism. Many socialist countries are experimenting with ways of reinvigorating their economies by introducing market forces. Many are also grappling with tough questions of political reform and democracy. In the process, things that may once have seemed certain have now become questions, or things to be discarded. But no matter how hard it may be, this renewal of socialism is vitally important and necessary.

China - socialism versus democracy?

Against this general trend, the recent bloody events in the People's Republic of China are a shocking reversal. It is extremely difficult to untangle the whole truth from the sensationalist anti-Communism of the Western media. But two things are clear.

Firstly, the democracy movement led by the students has at least fairly widespread support amongst the citizens of China. The People's Liberation Army turned its guns, not on a small group of "counter-revolutionary" students, but on the people. This

action, in which hundreds or even thousands were killed, is an atrocity - even more so because it happened on the orders of a socialist government.

Secondly, the PLA's attack on the people reveals an extremely deep alienation between the Communist Party and the state on the one hand, and the people on the other. The repression can only worsen this. As a weeping girl in Tiananmen Square said: "The government may have won the battle, but today it has lost the hearts of the Chinese people."

Socialism and democracy

How could such a situation develop in a socialist country? This question raises the enormously important issue of politics and democracy in a socialist society. It is a question which has for a long time been under-emphasised, both in theory and in practice.

The classical definition of socialism or communism focuses on the relations of production. Capitalism is defined by private ownership and control of the means of production. Socialism is defined by social ownership and control of the means of production.

But this definition says nothing about the form of the socialist state, or about politics and democracy in a socialist society. In practice, most socialist societies have been characterised by very little democracy, perhaps partly because of this theoretical insufficiency, but very largely also because socialism has emerged in under-developed countries surrounded by hostile forces.

Perestroika

But the issue of socialist democracy has become, along with the question of socialist economics, the key question of our times. It is being grappled with in Nicaragua, in the Soviet Union, in Poland - and in China.

Nicaragua has opted for a combination of parliamentary democracy and mass organisations of people's power, together with a mixed economy.

Perestroika in the Soviet Union started with economic restructuring, and then came to focus on political reforms as it became clear that the support of the people could only be ensured if they became full participants. This was even more the case as bureaucrats and others deepened their resistance to perestroika. Democratisation became essential. The leadership in the USSR has been sufficiently clear-sighted and flexible to lead this process and accommodate popular demands.

In Poland, by contrast, the party leadership has lost the confidence of the people. The recent elections show

a wave of popular support for Solidarity, and a rejection of the party. No doubt the turning point for the party came with the attempt to crush Solidarity in 1981. The leadership has however recognised that it is impossible to govern a socialist society without the support of the people, and has chosen the road of negotiation and political pluralism. No-one knows where it may end. There are even groupings within the state and the party who argue for a restoration of capitalism and social democracy as in Sweden.

Unfortunately the Chinese leadership chose not to learn from the Polish experience - that a leadership which crushes a popular movement for democracy and change will find it very difficult to survive in the long run. The party may survive, but the leadership will have to go.

In this edition we carry a briefing which describes some of the reforms which underlie the current events in China. We also publish a much more detailed analysis of how the reforms of 'market socialism' affect the industrial working class. The latter article focuses on the trade unions and their changing role.

The future of South Africa

The questions raised by the articles on China have a bearing on debates about the future of South Africa. Questions of democracy, the economy, the role of trade unions, the place of the working class, are all raised by the im-

pending independence of Namibia, as well as by discussion of the constitutional guidelines issued last year by the African National Congress.

In interviews in the current edition, both NUM's James Motlatsi and NUMSA's Moses Mayekiso stress the importance of discussing these questions now, as part of the process of preparing for the end of apartheid. We hope the *Bulletin* can contribute in a small way to that discussion.

New premises

We apologise to readers for the lateness of this edition. Production was somewhat disrupted by our move to new premises. However, we hope that you will be compensated by the fact that this *Bulletin* is 8 pages longer than usual in order to accommodate the Natal interviews, which arrived as we were going to print. We trust you will as always enjoy your read! ☆

Karl von Holdt, editor

The Bulletin has moved!

The Labour Bulletin has moved to new premises. We now have larger offices in Johannesburg city. We hope the move will help us to produce an even better Bulletin than before.

Our new address is:

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Fighting the LRA

by *CAROLE COOPER*

One of the most controversial sections in the Labour Relations Amendment Act promulgated last year is section 79(2) which makes it possible for unions, their officials or members to be sued for loss of production in the case of an unlawful strike. The section reads as follows: "Any member, office bearer or official of a trade union, employers organisation or federation who interferes in the contractual relationship between an employer and employee resulting in the breach of such a contract shall be liable in delict, and until the contrary is proved, be deemed to have been acting with due authority on behalf of the trade union, employers organisation or federation concerned."

Employers were quick to take advantage of the revised section, and it was reported in October 1988 that three Reef companies, Kwela Wholesale Meat supply, Ullman Brothers, and Pyramid Distributors, were suing three COSATU affiliates for a total of R4m for unlawful strikes. Although these actions were later suspended or dropped, the attitude of an industrial relations advisor for the three companies, Mr Phillip van Welbergen, was that unions should act responsibly

if they wished to avoid the law being used to close them down.

While it has always been possible for employers to sue unions for damages in the event of unlawful strikes, what has been changed is the burden of proof. In addition, the actual wording has been expanded making it easier for employers to sue unions for actions of their members by bankrupting them.

NUMSA stands back

One of the ways of avoiding such action is for unions to withdraw from any involvement in unlawful strikes, and this has been a strategy adopted by the National Union of Metalworkers' of South Africa in a number of strikes in the metal industry in the last few months. The union has argued that the law, by forcing it to withdraw from involvement, will lessen the chances of speedily resolving the dispute, particularly in cases where management has to deal with a leaderless mass of workers. NUMSA's position has been that it will intervene only if management agrees to waive its right to sue under the new LRA.

NUMSA's strategy has been met with varying responses from the companies concerned. In all cases they have initially refused to agree to the waiver, preferring to take the workers or the union to court, or refusing to stick to the recognition agreement with the union.

In a strike of 1,200 workers at Haggie Rand in April, the company, faced



Strike at Haggie Rand

Photo: Labour Bulletin

with no union to bargain with and reluctant to agree to the waiver demand, went to the Industrial Court. It applied for a ruling that in not advising their members to return to work and in not playing a constructive role in settling the dispute, the shop stewards had committed an unfair labour practice.

The court action was delayed because hundreds of workers requested that their names be added to the list of respondents. The company, faced with a lengthy court action and a prolonged strike, finally agreed to the union's waiver condition and a settlement was reached. The company admitted that it had suffered substantial financial losses.

Bosses refuse to waive right to sue

In three other strikes, at Altron's Lascon Lighting and Standard Telephone Cables (STC), and Barlow Rand's Robor company, the companies refused at all to agree to waive the right to sue. Altron's decision was based on legal advice that it should not agree. It chose instead, in both strikes, to use the courts to attempt to defeat the striking workers. In the strike of 500 workers at Lascon Lighting, the company was granted an interdict in the Rand Supreme Court instructing the workers to return to work. The workers complied, but not before the strike had lasted 15 days.

In the STC strike of 200 workers, the company appealed to the Industrial Court for an interdict ordering the strikers to return to work. The court granted the order but later suspended it, urging the union and the company to negotiate instead. NUMSA agreed to negotiate even though the company had not agreed to waive section 79(2), because it felt that acting on the court's instruction gave it immunity.

A third response has been the attitude of Robor, which, when faced with a strike, tried to compel the union to get involved by referring to the union's obligations in terms of the recognition agreement between them. The union argued, however, that the amendment to section 79 had changed the position and that the union would only intervene if the company undertook to waive its rights under that section. The company refused and tore

up the recognition agreement. NUMSA has accepted this action but still insists that the company deals with the union over issues affecting the workers at the company.

What is clear from the above, is that section 79(2), designed to reduce industrial action, has in fact led to longer strikes. NUMSA's tactics have driven the editor of *Business Day* to write that Section 79(2) should be scrapped as a "striking failure", as "management cannot go on trying to deal with an amorphous mass".

There are signs that the Department of Manpower probably agrees. It recently instructed the National Manpower Commission to review the entire Labour Relations Act.

NUMSA's response, it seems, has been a successful one. To quote a spokesperson of the union, "The act will either kill us or we will kill it". ☆

The I G Metall Code, the LRA and disinvestment

by *CAROLE COOPER*

The intention of the Labour Relations Amendment Act (LRA) promulgated in September 1988 has been to undercut the hard-won gains made by unions over the last decade. Concerned about this attack, the German

union, I G Metall, approached the South African Co-ordinating Council of the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) to discuss solidarity with I G Metall.

I G Metall is the union for metalworkers in West Germany, and it is the largest union in the country. Two working groups from I G Metall visited South Africa in 1988 and had discussions with the IMF unions here. After the discussions I G Metall drew up a 14-point code. The code aims to pressurise German companies operating in South Africa to sign the code as a standard which will govern relations between the company and the union. The code goes a long way to restoring those rights removed by the LRA as well as addressing problems of workers which arise from the system of apartheid in general.

Companies signing the code must:

1. Remove the 'exploitative advantages provided by apartheid laws', in particular in relation to the homelands.
2. Not take advantage of the use of security and emergency laws, and in particular continue to pay the wages and employ detained employees, as well as those who have been sentenced under security legislation.
3. Show a readiness to negotiate at company level with the representative trade union regarding all internal company affairs.
4. Grant unions right of access to company premises.
5. Provide facilities for meetings and voting on company premises without interference from manage-

ment.

6. Guarantee shopstewards rights, including the provision of the necessary facilities and a release from work.
7. Accept the right of unions to represent their members in disciplinary and grievance proceedings.
8. Recognise the right to strike, that is, not dismiss workers who have gone on strike.
9. Accept the right of workers peacefully to picket on company premises.
10. Renounce using the industrial council system to render strikes illegal.
11. Agree to refer any labour dispute which falls under South African court to mutually acceptable arbitrator.
12. Not jeopardise the right of employees to stay in hostel and other company accommodation, except in the case of a fair termination of the employment relationship.
13. Guarantee the maintenance of these standards also in the case of companies which are dependent on German subsidiaries and in the case of franchisees, and
14. Report annually regarding compliance with these principles in each company to the relevant South African trade union, as well as to the German parent company's central works council.

Joint formulation

In expanding on the principles, I G Metall said that they reflected both the practical needs of the young black

trade unions, as well as the knowledge of I G Metall gained during numerous past attempts to offer help and show solidarity. The body said that the fact that they had been jointly formulated made them a 'new and significant step along the road to South African policy' and that 'it was not intended to pre-empt or influence from outside any of the actual result of the South African unions' struggle.'

Foreign companies operating in South Africa, it said, should be judged according to the minimum legal standards which they were accustomed to applying in their operations at home. These conditions were set out in the code. I G Metall went further, however, and said that the 14 points were not merely a matter of significance to German companies. Other measures, it said, such as various ILO conventions relating to South Africa, or the European Social Charter, could also lead to the same results. The implications of I G Metall's point is that such conventions or charters could be used to bind non-German companies to signing undertakings similar to the I G Metall Code.

But unions have experienced problems in getting the code accepted by companies. Initially negotiations seemed to run smoothly and in early December 1988 six of the major German multinationals - BMW, VW, Mercedes Benz, Siemens, Robert Bosch and Hella - signed or accepted in-principle agreement to implement the points. However they qualified this by saying it was necessary to adjust the points from company to

BRIEFINGS

company. This led to negotiations at each company on the implementation of the code in line with the company's specific conditions.

According to one of the IMF unions involved in the negotiations, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), two problems have emerged from these negotiations, which have been discussed at the shop-stewards council for stewards from German companies.

Firstly it was felt that the 'adjustment' clause was being used to introduce points which would change the actual principles of the Code. Secondly, companies were adopting a 'quid pro quo' stance: that is, companies were demanding that unions give up certain rights in exchange for signing the principles. Workers have felt that the quid pro quo stance would reduce their rights, especially in companies such as VW, where workers have won significant concessions in the past. As a result negotiations with the companies have been restarted on a new footing, with varied progress. According to NUMSA, the union is close to an agreement with Mercedes Benz, with some progress being made at VW, BMW, and Siemens, but with little progress at Robert Bosch and Hella.

Moves in European Parliament

Discussion on the code has not been confined to negotiations between



German subsidiaries and South African unions. The West German government, in particular, the German foreign minister, Hans Dietrich Genscher, has spearheaded a move to have the code accepted by the Eu-

ropean Parliament and incorporated into the European Economic Community (EEC) code. A working committee comprising senior diplomats from all 12 of the member nations have met three times to discuss ways of implementing the code (*Weekly Mail*, 14 April).

However, there has been strong resistance to the idea of incorporating the code from, in particular, the British. According to the British labour attache in South Africa, John Sawyer, the code represents an interesting new departure, especially because of the involvement of unions in drawing it up. But Britain was opposed to its incorporation into the EEC Code as this would mean, he says, that British companies would be expected to adhere to principles which were enshrined in German law and not British law.

Adopting the 14 points would mean giving more rights to workers in South Africa than those in Britain, he says. He argues that the German labour relations system is far more legalistic than the British system, which relies more heavily on collective bargaining for the granting of rights to workers. He argues further that neither COSATU, the British Trade Union Congress nor the local metal unions have argued for it to be

incorporated into EEC Code. However, the British government would not object to British companies signing an agreement themselves based on the 14 points.

According to Peter Ruthman, the German labour attache, opposition to the incorporation of the 14 points into the EEC Code has also been expressed by socialist governments of Greece and Portugal. Other sources say that Spain and Belgium also oppose the move, with Denmark and France adopting a neutral stand.

However in a compromise measure, the EEC countries have agreed to draw up a declaration which would urge European companies in South Africa to adopt the 14 points. Commenting on the German move, officials from NUMSA said that while they would welcome it if the companies of other countries were subjected to pressure to sign the code, whether it was incorporated into the EEC Code was immaterial.

What implication does the adopting of the code have for the disinvestment and sanctions campaign? Is there not a contradiction in supporting disinvestment (in line with COSATU's policy on the issue), while negotiating the terms for German companies to operate here?

Minimum requirements

In the code, I G Metall addresses this question, seeing the implementation of the code as the minimum requirements for those wishing to remain in the country. 'Companies

operating in South Africa despite all the international appeals for economic sanctions, must therefore at the very least declare themselves prepared not to benefit from this undemocratic and anti-social legal system. This principle forms the basis of the list of demands for minimum standards for labour relations and labour conflicts contained herein.'

NUMSA officials involved in negotiating the code have stressed their commitment to COSATU's sanctions and disinvestment policy. They see the 14 points as having nothing to do with the issue. The importance of the 14 points, they stress, is that they are a significant effort to fight the Labour Relations Act (LRA) and for unions to regain rights lost through the amendment act. The 14 points, they believe, represent a step in the campaign agreed on between COSATU and NACTU to get companies to agree to contract out of the LRA. Most of the points which unions object to in the LRA are by-passed by the points in the I G Metall Code.

Despite these union assurances, however, it remains to be seen whether the companies reaching agreements based on the code will use this as an argument for remaining in the country. This was a tactic used in the past by companies which signed either the Sullivan Principles, the EEC Code, or one of the other codes. Yet there is a material deference: in comparison to the above codes, the I G Metall 14 points have teeth and would, if agreed upon, represent a significant gain for unions - which is probably why com-

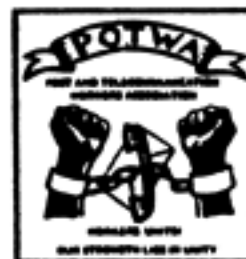
Greater unity in the public sector

by RENEE ROUX

There is a buzzing enthusiasm when leaders of the public sector meet, which for the last two months has been a regular occasion. At last S A Municipal Workers Union, S A Railway and Harbours Workers Union, Post Office and Telecommunication Workers Association and National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union have found the time to co-ordinate their efforts towards strengthening organisation in the public sector. All agree it is long overdue, that similar problems and changing conditions in this sector make united action an urgent task.

They have chosen to bring their structures and resources together in common opposition to creeping privatisation of state corporations and institutions. The guiding principle at this stage is *UNITY IN ACTION*, rather than the formation of permanent structures and constitutions at this stage.

Public sector unions agree the best weapon against privatisation is strong organisation in the private sector, and their planned joint campaigns will be



aimed at achieving this. They recognise that their duty to the entire democratic movement is to spearhead resistance to privatisation, as this could be the most vicious attack yet by the state and capital on the living conditions of the vast majority of South Africans, black and white.

Changing conditions

The deepening economic and political crisis has raised privatisation as a serious option for the state and capital in the last few years. While the state hopes to solve its debt crisis by selling off its assets, capital is desperate for new areas of investment in the shrinking economy. Having abandoned the white working class as a constituency which has long enjoyed protected employment in the public sector, the state no longer cares about the social effects of privatisation.

The rate and exact nature of privatisation will differ between corporations such as SATS on the one hand, for which legislation is already underway, and services such as schools and hospitals on the other. This means privatisation will affect the four unions in different ways. But they are already feeling the effects as the state prepares for privatisation.

In SATS the effect on employment levels are more dramatic than elsewhere (see article on SARHWU). But generally the unions experience tight-

ning up. Retrenchments, the partially successful wage freeze, legislation aimed at weakening worker organisation, changing management structures and the formation of "business units", are all aimed at greater profitability.

The respective unions speak of increasing use of technology to replace workers, hidden retrenchments through dismissals, forced ill-health and early retirements and demotions, to the point that white workers are doing menial tasks, while management complain that they do not have the budget to create jobs.

Capital attracted by conditions in the public sector

Ultimately, unions agree that capital is particularly attracted to the public sector because of the low level of organisation and working conditions that prevail throughout. When a developed infrastructure and sophisticated technology have been developed in this sector, capital will definitely have an added advantage if privatisation could happen as fast as prospective investors desire.

Decades of archaic and racist labour practices have left workers in an incredibly vulnerable position. Thousands of African workers in the public sector are still regarded as "temporary" and migrant. Brutal disciplinary codes and a proliferation of "sweet-heart" staff associations which reinforce the skills hierarchy, have all combined to weaken organisations and dilute the demands of the majority unskilled and semi-skilled workers.

Structures for unity

The individual public sector unions recognise that a lot of time and energy will be wasted if they continue to organise their respective sectors in isolation from each other. They all face enormous problems of recognition, wages and working conditions, the temporary status of workers, the existence of conservative staff associations, and now privatisation. What's more, only about 80,000 out of a total of 500,000 workers in the public sector are organised.

The unions have not yet decided whether they should ultimately merge into one union. They believe that practical co-operation will show what form of unity would be most appropriate in the public sector. At this stage the respective unions need to address the peculiarities of their sector. Joint structures are being established at national, regional and local level to facilitate and encourage organising drives and campaigns. What proposals emerge from joint workshops or joint NEC's, will have to be fully ratified by the structures of each individual union.

The four unions agree that the central tasks are to organise public sector workers into strong unions and to be in a position to fight privatisation in united action or hopefully scare capital off altogether! How and when more formal structures of co-operation emerge in the future will depend on the process of struggle and whether workers will see the need for a general public sector union. ☆

Mobil is mobile

by *DEBBIE BUDLENDER*

Mobil has always been at the forefront of the anti-disinvestment campaign. Their president, Sal Marzullo, is a founding member of the Coalition on Southern Africa (COSA), an organisation of American business people founded in September 1987 with one of its chief aims being to fight disinvestment. Even Simon Barber, a US journalist who himself is anti-disinvestment, does not like COSA. He says "COSA was a gimmick snatched at by craven executives looking for an easy fix to their South African problem" (*Cape Times*, 21.3.89).

Mobil has fought hard against US laws which they think will affect their South African interests.

- In January 1988, the US government made a law, called the Rangel Amendment, which meant that US multinationals would have to pay tax both in South Africa and the United States. Mobil accused the government of "sneaking through" this amendment in the Budget Bill (*Cape Times*, 22.5.89). (It is estimated that Mobil lost at least R12m worth of profit through Rangel's effects in 1988.)
- In April 1988 Mobil and five other oil companies refused to give evidence before a sub-com-

Mobil

mittee of the US House of Representatives which was investigating oil sanctions.

- In June 1988 Mobil employed a lawyer to prepare a case against the US government if the Dellums Bill became law. Dellums - which eventually was not passed - would have forced all US multinationals to disinvest completely. Mobil wanted to sue the US government for \$400m, the value of Mobil's South African assets.

Mobil has been in South Africa for more than ninety years. It is the US company with the biggest investment in South Africa. It owns assets worth about \$400m dollars here - companies which produce fuels, lubricants, asphalt and other products - and sells its products in South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho. Mobil owns or supplies more than 1100 service stations. Their refinery in Durban produces 65,000 barrels of oil a day. They also have a 47% interest in a large oil refinery in Durban. Altogether Mobil companies employ about 2,800 people. About 1,300 of these employees are "white". Of the rest, 1,200 are members of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU). In the middle of 1987, CWIU sent a letter to the 41 multinationals in which they were organised asking that management come to a meeting to discuss the union's demands around disinvestment (see previous *Labour Bulletin*). Most of the companies re-

fused to come to this meeting. Mobil said that it was not relevant for them because they were definitely not considering disinvesting.

In the middle of 1988, CWIU again asked multinationals to come to a meeting. Again Mobil refused - using the same reason. Each time the company gave the same reply to the union - it was "not considering disinvestment, and should it do so in the future it will consider the appropriate method of consulting the union", (*Weekly Mail*, 28.4.89)

Mobil pulls out

In February 1989, Mobil even added in their letter that they were "prepared to negotiate the issue with shopstewards should disinvestment become an issue".

Then in mid-April this year the newspapers suddenly announced that Mobil was disinvesting. They were selling their South African shares to Trek, a subsidiary of Gencor, which already owns 36 service stations.

Many people were very surprised at this move. But Rod Crompton, the General Secretary of CWIU, says that despite Mobil's denials to the union, the company has been making its plans for at least 16 months.

In October last year an internal memorandum from a senior advisor in Mobil US to Allan E Murray, chief executive officer, was leaked to the press. This memorandum refers to a document dated 18 December 1987.

The 1987 document discusses contingency plans for disinvestment. It

says that if Mobil must disinvest, they should establish a trust company in a Jersey Island tax haven. Then they should choose one of three ways to sell their assets: (a) sell to someone else (b) sell to their employees in the form of a trust or (c) sell to Mobil shareholders. After the sale money would then flow from the new owners to the Jersey Island tax haven.

After the disinvestment announcement CWIU asked the Industrial Court to stop the sale of Mobil's assets until the company agreed to negotiate. The court twice postponed hearing the matter. The matter is still to be finalised.

Workers took action in several plants. In Cape Town about 30 shopstewards held a 30-minute placard demonstration outside the company's South African head office. In Johannesburg workers also held a placard demonstration. In Durban the same action was taken, with workers also refusing to work overtime.

The company then agreed to meet with the union on 8 May. But Jacques Franken, Mobil industrial relations manager, admitted that they would only discuss the *consequences*, not the process, of the disinvestment. So they would not discuss demands such as twelve month's notice. Afterwards the union described the meeting as a "farce". Mobil refused to give any information about the deal. They said that local management did not know anything and the union must ask Mobil headquarters in the US.

But when a US activist asked Allen Murray, Mobil US's Chairper-

BRIEFINGS



CWIU demonstration outside Mobil offices in Johannesburg

Photo: Chris Ledochowski/Afrapix

son, about this at the Mobil annual shareholders' meeting, Murray replied; "You ask us whether we intend to negotiate the terms of this agreement. Not that I know of." (*Cape Times*, 13.5.89).

At the moment many things about the deal are unclear. Many people are saying that Gencor is buying the assets at a "bargain basement price" of \$150m (R360m), instead of their real value of at least R906m. Other press reports quoted a spokesperson for Mobil who said that they were getting more than the "book value" of the companies, and mentioned a figure of R500m (*Argus*, 28.4.89).

Although the company has not given full details, we do know some things about the deal. Mobil is selling its assets but like many other com-

panies which say they have disinvested, Mobil will continue to do business with South Africa. Murray admitted that they will allow Gencor to use Mobil technology and formulas. Gencor can even use the Mobil logo! Of course, Gencor will also pay Mobil for the use of all this.

The industrial court case was postponed until 24 May when Mobil's lawyers promised that the company would provide full information to the union.

Meanwhile a group of black business people has approached Mobil with a counter-bid. They offered to pay more than Gencor. They said Mobil must sell to them to show that the company is against apartheid. These business people also approached CWIU. They had a meeting

With us you are ^{still} Number One

14 May - Mobil puts id in paper saying that nothing will change under the new owners, especially their 'great team of people'. Mobil workers want some say in the process to ensure this.

with representatives of CWIU on 12 May before travelling to the US to meet with Mobil head office.

After the meeting CWIU said that they appreciated the fact that these business people had consulted the workers. This is something Gencor, as one of "the most notoriously anti-union corporations in South Africa" (*South*, 3.5.89) would not consider. Bernard Smith, director of Gencor, has said that it is up to Mobil to negotiate with the union. But CWIU also said they could not support the new deal either until Mobil agrees to negotiate with the union.

In June 1988 Mobil boasted in their evidence to a US Senate Committee considering sanctions that "It is companies like Mobil .. who have been the first ... to sign union agreements ..." Their dishonesty and refusal to negotiate on the subject of disinvestment seem to negate this. As they continued to refuse, workers at many Mobil plants came out on strike.

Then, after two weeks of refusing to negotiate or make any offers, Mobil's position changed and the union suspended the strike, which by that time had spread to 19 depots. A strike ballot had also been taken at the Mobil Refinery in Durban.

At the meeting with the union on 19 May, Mobil agreed to guarantee se-

curity of employment for all employees for 12 months. Gencor signed both the guarantee and a document setting out the present conditions of employment. Mobil also provided the union with a lot more information about the deal (much of the information was made public at Mobil US's AGM on 12 May, but the company refused to give the information to the union).

The information shows that Mobil is selling its assets, but it will continue to do business with South Africa - like many other companies which say they are disinvesting. Mobil has guaranteed that they will supply old technology to Gencor for at least five years (they do not say whether they will supply new technology). And Gencor can use the Mobil logo! Mobil has stated that there will be no royalty payments from Gencor to Mobil for the five year period.

By the beginning of June, the union and Mobil had deadlocked on several issues - the amount of separation pay for each worker, a copy of the agreement of sale, and the establishment of a trust fund. A new dispute has been declared and a conciliation board applied for.

The union has called a national general meeting of all Mobil workers in Durban on 17 June to discuss further action. (2.6.89) ☆

Workers shot, intimidated in Plascon strike

by KARL VON HOLDT

A wave of industrial action has hit six Plascon plants organised by SA Chemical Workers Union. About 1,500 workers have been on strike/locked out for over a month. Management has made use of the lock-out, a tactic which has become increasingly popular with employers over the last 18 months. Workers at all six plants were locked out either just after embarking on strike action over their wage demands, or before they could do so. Plascon is clearly hoping to go on the offensive with this tactic, and force the workers into submission.

Workers from all plants are meeting regularly at the union offices in Lekton House. They have started a number of singing, drumming and poetry groups. Recently they held a fundraising concert. First on the programme were the "SACWU Black Mambazo", followed by a beauty contest where male workers dressed up as women competed with each other - there is still room for jokes and laughter in the middle of a bitter strike.

For the union, after the newly-laun-

ched MEWUSA, the second biggest affiliate of NACTU, the central issues are winning a living wage and establishing the right to national company bargaining. Workers are also angry about the violent harassment they are facing.

Plascon has refused to negotiate at company level, and the union has had to negotiate separately at each plant. The fact that at each negotiation the union meets the same Plascon personnel officer shows that this is unreasonable. There can be no reason to insist on plant-level bargaining other than to weaken the union's position and preserve wage differences between plants. In an effort to unify workers, SACWU tabled the same demands in all Plascon plants where it is organised. The main demands were for a R300 per month across the board increase, a 40 hour week, 21 March and 16 June as paid public holidays, and four months maternity leave.

Strike

The dispute centres on wages. The company offered increases according to grades, R115 at the bottom and R148 at the top. Deadlock was reached in different plants. In accordance with the recognition agreements, this was followed by mediation - which failed to resolve the dispute.

The union then applied for Conciliation Boards in each plant. During meetings of the boards, the union reduced its demand to R200. The company accepted the idea of an across-the-board increase, and added



Plascon workers from different plants meet to discuss strike

Photo: Labour Bulletin

service allowances which took its final offer to R130 across the board, R135 for those with over 5 years, and R140 for those with over 15 years service. The union rejected this, but said that its demand of R200 was still negotiable. The last conciliation meeting was held on 5 May. After this various plants balloted, and the results were in favour of industrial action.

Workers at the Tarranova plant in Alberton staged a sit-in strike on 8 May. The next day they found the gates locked, and sat in the road outside. On the 10th they were dispersed by police.

At the Luipardsvlei plant workers started a go-slow on 10 May. On the 12th they were locked out. Inmont staged a strike on 9 May, and was locked out on the 10th. Doornfontein

launched a sit-in on 15 May, and were locked out the following day. At the Polycell plant in Aldrode workers were locked out on 28 April, even before they had balloted.

All in all some 1,500 workers are locked out, including those at a plant in Durban. They regard themselves as being on strike. According to SACWU'S Humphrey Ndaba, the strike/lockout "is now a trial of strength. He who backs down will be forced to give up his position. Management is trying to force workers to accept their offer."

When *Labour Bulletin* visited the striking workers at Lekton House, we found a mood of power and unity. Workers were *toyi-toying* and enjoying poetry, drumming and singing performances. Speaker after speaker

stressed that everyone should be involved in culture, that it is something belonging to the people. The union has placed great emphasis on developing and training cultural groups from amongst the strikers, as it expects the strike to be a long one. Through this workers can strengthen their resolve, communicate to other workers, and also raise funds.

Workers shot at

Shopstewards told us of the following experiences of harassment:

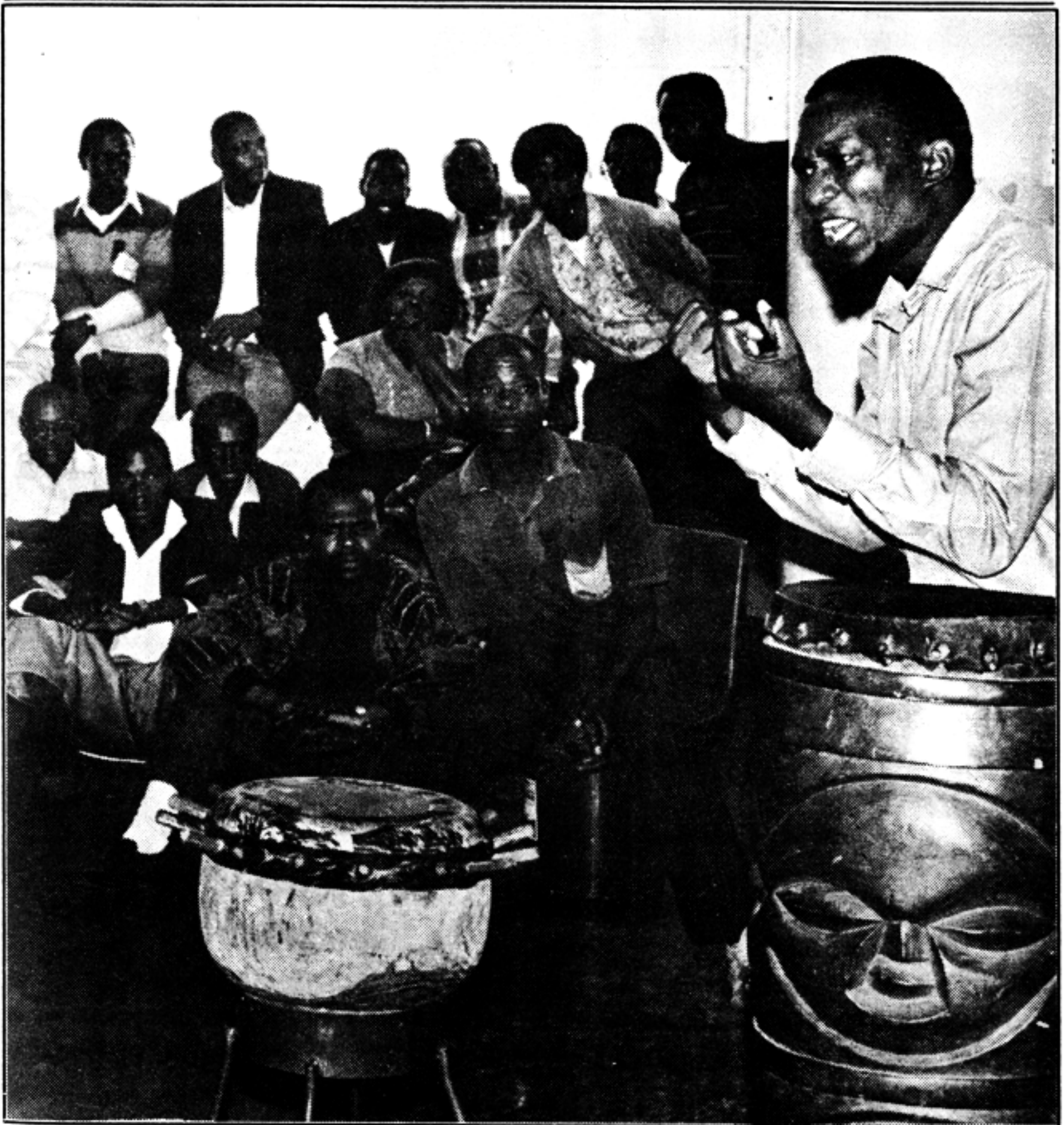
- Tarranova workers allege that they have been visited at their homes by the black personnel manager together with police, to pressurise them into returning to work. They were promised protection against "intimidators"
- Workers at Tarranova also allege that the company is telling doctors not to treat workers as Plascon's medical aid will not accept responsibility.
- Another worker was woken at 1 am and taken to a place "near John Vorster Square". There he was told by his abductors that he was known to be an "intimidator", and if any scab was hit or harmed he would be held responsible. "Your family will wait for you for 10 years, but they won't find you," he was told before being released. Two days later a neighbor told the same worker that six men had been searching for him, one armed with a gun.
- More recently, three workers who

live in Thokoza were shot at by unknown gunmen. One, Themba Kubheka, was wounded. He had earlier been charged by the police with intimidation. When the union contacted the company about this, the response was that "it must be vigilantes retaliating against Khubeka, because it is believed that he threw a petrol bomb at the house of a scab. Scabs are being intimidated, and what does the union say about that?" according to Ndaba. The two others had shots fired into their houses. Ndaba alleges that one of them was arrested for intimidation when he reported the shooting to the police.

If these allegations are true, they show a shockingly high level of violence directed against workers who are engaged in a legal strike for higher wages.

National bargaining

The fact that the wage negotiations started separately, but have now culminated in national industrial action over the same demands at six plants, may well force Plascon to accept national bargaining. Ndaba points out that if management settles at one plant, it will be very difficult to avoid extending the agreement to others. Workers are now striking together and will probably support each other. "As far as we are concerned," says Ndaba, "we are negotiating nationally. Plascon might realise that they cannot divide the workers, and reconsider."



Cultural workers perform for strikers - the union plans to use cultural events to conscientise people about the strike and to raise money

Photo: Labour Bulletin

He says that before the last mediation, at Luipardsvlei, Plascon's negotiator said that if they reached settlement there, the company would be prepared to extend it to the other plants.

Meanwhile, workers' determination has been strengthened by Plascon's response to a telex asking for information on its financial posi-

tion. The company answered that it had the money to meet the workers' demand, but that that was not the issue - the company was not prepared to pay wages above market rates.

Workers resolved that they must continue the struggle, as market rates have got nothing to do with a living wage. ☆

people of South Africa, declare our
the world to know:
belongs to all
book

SOCIALIST WORKERS' UNION
AGAINST APARTHEID



NO! to restrictions

The ANC's Constitution Guidelines

VIVA MAY DAY!
UDF & WORKERS

STAY AWAY FROM THE SATS
LIVING WAGE



UDF
UDF & WORKERS



JUNE 16

FREEDOM CHARTER

We, the people of South Africa, declare
country and the world to know:
That South Africa belongs to all who live
and within, and that no government can just
legitimately exist if it is based on the will of the
minority instead of the will of the majority.
We have been robbed of our
freedom by a form of gov-
ernment which has oppressed, exploited and
oppressed us.

MAKE YOUR MARK AGAINST APARTHEID!!

PEOPLE'S POWER



SANCTIONS



NO! to high rent.
NO! to community councils

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

COSATU's two biggest affiliates, the National Union of Mine-workers (NUM) and the National Union of Metal-workers of SA (NUMSA), both held their biennial national congresses recently. These congresses are important as they chart the political and organisational direction of the unions.

Key decisions taken at the NUMSA and NUM congresses will be referred as resolutions to the COSATU congress - scheduled for mid-July - for discussion. Thus the congresses of NUMSA and NUM provide important indications about the major issues that will be discussed in COSATU's congress.

James Motlatsi is president of the biggest union in South Africa, with 240,000 members. In 1987 the union launched the biggest strike in South African history, when 360,000 workers out in support of NUM's wage demands. The industry suffered huge financial losses, but the union was forced to back down when Anglo American fired 50,000 strikers. In the aftermath the employers directed fierce repression against NUM. It has, however, recovered remarkably fast.

Moses Mayekiso is general secretary of a union with diverse origins. Three unions came together to form


Speaking about politics

Interviews with James Motlatsi and Moses Mayekiso

NUMSA in 1987. NUMSA now has a paid-up membership of 180,000 - a growth of 43% since it was launched. Through a series of tactical and organisational advances, including last years' limited strike, NUMSA has become the dominant union in the metal and engineering industry. It also

dominates the motor assembly and components industries.

In the past NUM and NUMSA have often clashed with each other in COSATU forums. NUM was seen as the major protagonist of the 'populist' position, while NUMSA was seen as the major 'workerist' union. However, as these interviews show, a high level of consensus has been established. The prospects for this years' COSATU congress are a more unified federation than ever before.

In this feature we publish the two interviews, key resolutions from NUM, NUMSA, and ACTWUSA and an overview of political debates in COSATU. We follow with an article written by members of Chemical Workers Industrial Union in Phalaborwa, in which they describe their experiences during the period of peoples' power in 1985-6. Finally, there is an interview with two Natal unionists about the death of Jabu Ndlovu in continuing violence in Natal. 

Interview: James Motlatsi, president of NUM

JAMES MOTLATSI speaks to LABOUR BULLETIN about the union's 1989 Congress which was held in April, about the political situation, and about resistance to Anglo's campaign of repression on the mines.

Labour Bulletin: *NUM was quite battered and weakened by repression after the 1987 strike. Judging by the congress has the union recovered, or is it still weakened?*

Motlatsi: At the 1987 congress NUM took important resolutions, such as the resolution on "Mineworkers take control". Immediately after the congress, workers implemented the resolutions at a number of mines, particularly the collieries. Repression started in the mining industry not only because of the strike, but because of what happened after the congress, before the strike. The mining bosses realised that NUM is a union which does not just adopt resolutions for the sake of adopting them.

They wanted to smash the union in a gentle way, because the present pol-

itical situation makes the state and employers reluctant to use tactics such as banning organisations or restricting leaders. The attack they used was to dismiss workers. They aimed to destroy the structures of the union - that is why they dismissed leadership at national, regional and branch level. Not only leadership in structures, but activists at shaft level. Some leaders were deported to neighbouring states, and refused entry back into South Africa.

They wanted to demobilise the union and discourage workers from being members. Dismissals were followed by repression - the derecognition of shaftsteward agreements, the installation of mine security all over the shafts, surrounding hostels with security fences, the ID system restricting access to mine property, and an increase in assaults

by white miners and black supervisors. It was clear the mine bosses wanted to destroy the union in a subtle way.

In 1988 we had our special conference. The morale was very low, because of what I have mentioned. But an important resolution was adopted, to rebuild our structures and go forward regardless of repression.

Indeed, we succeeded. The congress this year was well attended, in spite of management's refusal to give time off to some delegates. Because of the determination of the workers some delegates took unpaid leave. As was planned, we had 601 delegates from 16 regions.

We in NUM thought that the 5th

JAMES MOTLATSI, president of the National Union of Mineworkers, was born in Lesotho in 1951. He worked for over 17 years in the mining industry - first as a rockface worker, then as a driller, and later as a team leader. After that he was employed as a personnel assistant at Western Deep Levels. Motlatsi has been active in NUM since its inception in 1981, and was elected president in 1987. Dismissed in the 1987 strike, he was voted full-time president after this year's NUM Congress. ☆

Congress in 1987 was marvellous - it was well-organised, the deliberations were good. But the 6th Congress this year was better. Deliberations were strong, healthy, and a number of important resolutions were adopted unanimously after long debate and amendments. This was the most powerful congress since the inception of NUM in 1982.

Labour Bulletin: *Could you describe the significance of the resolutions?*

Motlatsi: The congress focused on problems facing members on the shaft-floor. It focused on the structure of wages in the industry as a whole. It also focused on the political situation in the country. Our members showed they are not only fighting for bread and butter, today they are aware that the real problem is a political one. Today they are aware of the cause of oppression on the mines, the cause of poverty wages, the cause of migrant labour.

Our resolution on the constitutional guidelines of the ANC states that NUM is to organise conferences at shaft, branch, regional and national level to discuss the guidelines. We will push the same resolution to the COSATU congress in July, that COSATU should do the same.

Then when the decision is taken to go and discuss the constitutional guidelines with the African National Congress we will be able to put forward our thinking on the guidelines, which will be the thinking of the work-

UNIONS AND POLITICS

ing class, not just a few labour leaders. Because we believe the constitution of the country must be understood by the workers, by the masses.

Labour Bulletin: *What is the significance of the constitutional guidelines as NUM sees it?*

Motlatsi: They go together with the Freedom Charter. They are gui-

delines, they are not a constitutional proposal. We believe they need to be discussed by the masses. Most of our members didn't have an opportunity to go to



Mineworkers celebrate at NUM's 1989 congress

Photo: Cedric Nunn/Afrapix

school. Most documents such as the guidelines are in English, and the people who discuss them are usually educated. Our resolution makes it possible for our members to discuss and understand the guidelines.

Labour Bulletin: *Why is it important at this point to discuss the guidelines?*

Motlatsi: It's important, if one looks at changes internationally. In countries which were colonised, workers never play an important role. That brings conflict after liberation, because the constitution becomes a problem to the mass of people in that country.

We as NUM play an important role in the economy of the country, and we believe we must play an important role in the changes that are coming. We must discuss every proposal. We must participate in determining the way forward.

Labour Bulletin: *NUM has always had a close relation with the MUN, the Mineworkers' Union of Namibia. How does NUM see the current situation in Namibia and what will happen in the future?*

Motlatsi: The congress resolved to give support to the Namibian people - not only moral, but material support. Immediately after the congress we sent our co-operatives co-ordinator to Namibia. They requested this, as there will be thousands of exiles returning to Namibia and they want to prepare

for that. We are also prepared to send our staff to help them run their offices on day to day work, so that they are free to go and campaign for the election. We can't campaign for their elections, they have to handle that.

We hope that the entire labour movement, and the mass democratic movement, will give assistance to the Namibians. We hope progressive lawyers and doctors also give help. Because the regime is going all-out to give assistance to its puppets there. We believe that a victory for SWAPO will be a step forward for our struggle.

Labour Bulletin: *How do you see the situation regionally in Southern Africa?*

Motlatsi: South Africa is setting the pace regionally because it dominates the economy. Even governments which are anti-apartheid cannot be effective because their economy is dependent on South Africa. South Africa also actively destabilises those countries.

If SWAPO wins the elections in Namibia, what will South Africa's attitude be? Can you see common ground between anti-SWAPO forces in Namibia and UNITA in Angola? There you have a base for destabilisation.

Labour Bulletin: *Nonetheless, NUM has put forward the slogan, "A victory for SWAPO is a victory for us".*

Motlatsi: That is a very good slogan, and we believe in it. But there are

dangers facing SWAPO.

At independence Machel said, "The struggle continues." He realised that as long as there is oppression in South Africa it will be very difficult for neighbouring states to enjoy their independence. It is very good to know that the Mozambicans are sympathetic to our struggle, but what kind of assistance can they give us now? Is there any?

That is why the mass democratic movement must go all out now to provide any assistance or expertise the Namibian people may need, to build the ground now. They must be able to counter these forces now even before they win the elections.

Labour Bulletin: *How do you see the situation internationally, and especially the question of negotiations? It is being placed on the agenda by Thatcher, and there also seems to be pressure on the ANC.*

Motlatsi: The international pressure comes with a hidden agenda. There are still stumbling blocks between the ANC and the regime.

The Namibian situation is a lesson we have to learn. Even if the ANC reaches the stage where it has to compromise its own demands, we as the working class inside this country must be ready to put the pressure which the



ANC may not be able to put.

In Namibia now, they wholly depend on the external wing of SWAPO. The SWAPO internal wing is not so strong that it can put pressure inside Namibia. We must be able to put pressure inside

and outside when we reach that stage of negotiations - we must be able to negotiate from a powerbase so that we are not overpowered. The balance of forces at the time will determine the terrain of negotiations.

The balance of forces does not only mean the military balance of forces. There are forces inside the country. To start with, there are employers who are supporting apartheid one way or another. We as the working class will have to unite and counter that. So the working class, the trade unions and employers are all forces which have to play an important role.

One cannot rule out negotiations. Even MK was not formed to overthrow the government militarily. They resorted to that to put pressure on the ruling class to come to the negotiating table. We have not been against negotiations right from the beginning.

Labour Bulletin: *There is an argument that we must avoid negotiations, as they will sell out the working class. What is your response?*

Motlatsi: If you look at the role of the working class now, you cannot go to the negotiating table without the views of the working class. In other countries the working class did not play an important role. That is why we say the working class has to play not only an important role, but the leading role in our liberation.

Labour Bulletin: *According to NUM what is the way forward on the anti-apartheid conference (AAC)?*

Motlatsi: It was a very important conference, which is why it was banned. It will have to continue. The COSATU congress in July will have to decide how to do that.

Labour Bulletin: *What are the aims of the AAC?*

Motlatsi: The aim is to bring together organisations with different ideologies and political views but opposed to apartheid, to draw a line and say the real enemy is apartheid. Sometimes it seems the differences between anti-apartheid organisations are greater than the differences between these organisations and apartheid itself. What is important is to bring all these together and draw up a programme of action against apartheid itself.

There are criticisms from within our ranks. Some are saying why should we invite Wynand Malan, why should we invite so-and-so. But the fact is we are all against apartheid. Let us set a programme to eradicate apartheid. After that we will see if we can

solve our problems. It's a starting point to bring together all who are opposed to apartheid, so that we can set a base for tomorrow. Otherwise the organisations that were anti-apartheid will fight amongst themselves once apartheid is eradicated.

Labour Bulletin: *What is the role of the mass democratic movement in such an alliance?*

Motlatsi: The role of the mass democratic movement is to set the pace, draw up a programme, and to play a uniting role. It has to seek common ground with other anti-apartheid forces, even to go inside the ranks of apartheid to try to grab some of the people to our ranks. The mass democratic movement should not take an arrogant stand. We have to show daily that apartheid is wrong, and win people over to follow us.

That conference would have been the first to get forces even from within parliament. To isolate apartheid is a very important weapon.

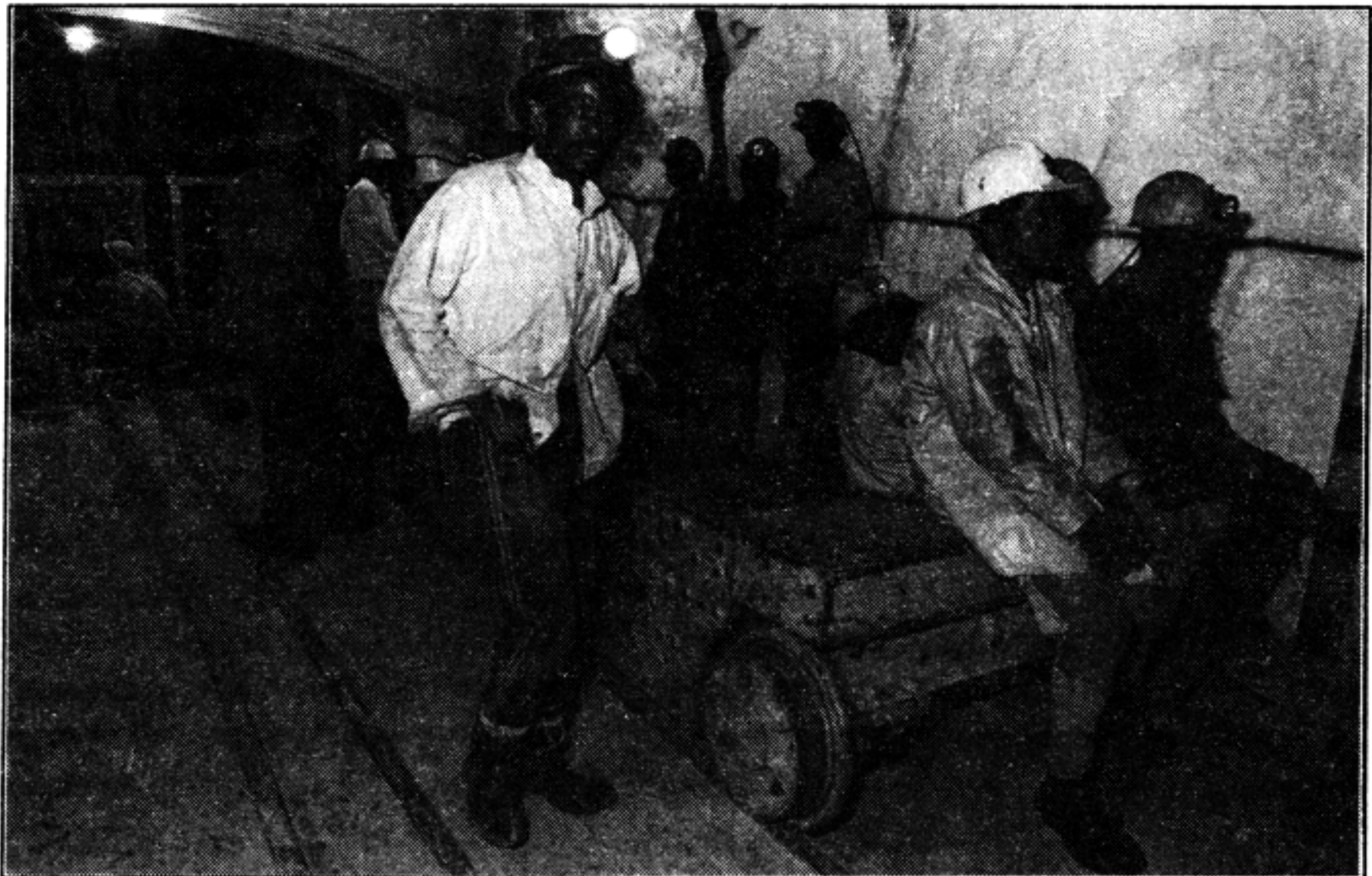
Labour Bulletin: *Does the formation of a broad anti-apartheid front not force the mass democratic movement to compromise its position? For example, there will be forces there which support a free enterprise system, and who oppose the Freedom Charter.*

Motlatsi: The AAC is not meant to discuss the future economy of the country. We know our positions. The conference is not supposed to change

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the positions of the different organisations. If those differences are debated at the conference it will not achieve anything. It will divide the people completely. That is where it is important to understand the two stages of our struggle.

policy of alliances with progressive organisations - essentially the United Democratic Front and its affiliates. NUM proposed the same policy at the 1987 COSATU Congress, and it was adopted. Looking back, how do you view that policy?



Mineworkers - the mass democratic movement depends on their involvement at grassroots level and their participation in community issues

Photo: David Lurie/Afrapix

The Freedom Charter states that everybody will be allowed to vote, it will be democratic. Democracy won't only exist to put people in power, it will also determine the type of economy. I believe in a planned economy, a socialist economy. But I don't believe it should be imposed on people. It is a long process. It is not as easy as some people think.

Labour Bulletin: *In 1987 NUM adopted the Freedom Charter and a*

Motlatsi: At the COSATU Special Congress last year COSATU resolved to convene an anti-apartheid conference. If the UDF was not banned it would have been the organisation to take that step. In other words, that showed that COSATU was willing to take political responsibility, and to take on the tasks of other organisations that were banned.

COSATU has also taken initiatives on meeting with NACTU, and is discussing the ANC constitutional gui-

delines. These also show that COSATU is taking on the tasks that UDF would have taken. This is the result of COSATU adopting the Charter and a policy of alliances.

Labour Bulletin: *So has the alliance made the sort of progress you were hoping for?*

Motlatsi: Not really. The alliance developed more at the national level and at the level of structures. There has not been enough progress at a grassroots level. It is easy at a national level. But when we adopted the policy we envisaged an alliance at all levels, and not just involving structures, but involving mass membership. So that if organisations are banned or leadership is detained, the masses are able to continue the work of the organisations and the alliance.

Labour Bulletin: *My impression, though, is that in places like Kattlehong and Johannesburg the alliance is quite strong at the local level.*

Motlatsi: I'm talking specifically from the perspective of the mineworkers. We have not established this alliance at the grassroots.

Labour Bulletin: *That raises a question. Most mineworkers live in isolated compounds, far from the townships. What does the alliance with the community mean in this situation?*

Motlatsi: We do have married

quarters in the townships. Community structures must be established there, but they haven't been. Even in the compounds, they should establish links with the community organisations. Especially now, mineworkers are often meeting in the townships because the union cannot get access to the mines. For example we are using the YMCA in Soweto. Community members should be coming to those meetings but they are not.

We believe that the community and the workers are the same thing. When workers knock off they go back to the community. Community members should attend every union meeting, and union members should attend every community meeting.

Labour Bulletin: *Last year UDF and the SA Youth Congress were banned. Many civics were smashed and some, such as Soweto Civic Association were banned. Isn't this one of the factors that has made it difficult to build the alliance?*

Motlatsi: You mention the banning of the Soweto Civic, but that's exactly where you find resistance continuing. They have been banned, but there are new ways of carrying on. To give an example, in the period of 1984-86 the youth were very militant. They were confronting authority daily in the townships. They were *toyitoying* in the streets. Now that militancy, or that form of struggle, has been crushed.

But you have new forms of struggle, such as the rent boycott. You

have structures that you don't even know the names of. You find a committee negotiating with the council - where do they come from? They are doing exactly the work of the Civic. Its members are Tutu - a minister; Chikane - a minister; Ramaphosa - a trade unionist; Sister Bernard Ncube - also from the church. And when they come from negotiations they report back to the people.

If the bannings were effective you would find nothing. Instead you find new structures and new struggles. That is how it should be. We need to adapt our strategies and choose the terrain.

Labour Bulletin: *It seems that the repression facing NUM on the mines is very similar to the repression in the communities. I imagine there are similar lessons to be learnt in dealing with this repression.*

Motlatsi: I do not like to talk about repression in the mines or anywhere else as if it was different from repression in the communities. Repression in South Africa is one. It is just that its form and the way it is practised differ in different places.

Repression on the mines operates under different conditions from repression in the townships. You have to analyse these differences so that you can develop the right approach to working under repression.

As far as we are concerned, the mining companies are a pillar of apartheid. All the oppressive measures come from the mining industry. The

state of emergency is the order of the day in the mining industry, it has been permanent since the mining industry was started. In the mining industry there is no freedom of speech, no freedom of association, no freedom that you may name. None.

The mine is a government by itself - it has its own military with its own military equipment. They ran the hostels for over one hundred years with their own military. Detention without trial started there, in their detention barracks. People are detained there without being taken to the SA Police.

So repression started in the mining industry. Recently though, around the time NUM was formed, some mining companies started to relax their repression. In particular Anglo American, which is well-known as a liberal company. But immediately after the strike they reversed everything by 30 or 40 years. The company that used to be the worst, Goldfields - today it's better than Anglo American.

Labour Bulletin: *I want to focus on shopfloor issues at this stage. How are the recruitment and anti-repression campaigns progressing?*

Motlatsi: I wouldn't say they have made so much progress. After the strike, with dismissals of over 50,000 workers and the loss of members, our membership dropped from 260,000 to between 180,000 and 190,000 paid up. Through the recruiting campaign we went to our congress this year with 240,000 paid up members. Within less than a year our recruitment has

become a success.

The anti-repression campaign has not yet been formally launched, although there are structures in some areas. It will link with all the other campaigns - the Living Wage Campaign, the health and safety campaign, Save the Patriots, the anti-Labour Relations Act and others. For us in NUM having the different campaigns under different sub-committees is simply a formality. We cannot use one strategy - the mining houses oppress us in different ways. We need different strategies. We believe you cannot run one campaign apart from the others.

Our objective is to organise 400,000 members by our 1991 congress. We are not only looking for numbers, we should be able to say we have achieved these wages, we achieved this in health and safety, and we saved so many of our patriots.

Labour Bulletin: *Before the 1987 strike you had many structures on the mines - the shaftsteward committees, health and safety structures, education structures, and so on. After the strike, with the repression, many structures collapsed. What progress have you made in rebuilding*

them?

Motlatsi: We have rebuilt all the main structures - that is the constitutional structures. They are operating quite successfully, from shaftstewards' committees up to branch and regional committees. At present we are busy rebuilding health and safety structures and education structures. Those three structures are not sufficient - that is why

we have established Save the Patriots, anti-repression and other structures. We would like to involve as many of our members as possible on a daily basis.

To have more than one structure is very important. That lesson we learnt on 12 August 1987. The whole regional structure was detained at Klerksdorp. But we

had education and health and safety structures, and the members of those structures immediately brought them together and formed an alternative. Now we would like as many structures as possible. Each and every member must give himself a task.

Labour Bulletin: *Isn't there a danger of too many structures, and a resulting lack of co-ordination between them?*

NUM FIGHTS FOR:

- A living wage
- Decent housing and an end to the compound system
- Better health and safety
- No job reservation or racism
- More control at the workplace
- Unity

Every mineworker a NUM member

UNIONS AND POLITICS

Motlatsi: There would be a danger if the structures were autonomous and not accountable - then they could pull in different directions. But all of the structures I have mentioned are accountable and subordinate to the constitutional structures - the shaftstewards committee at shaft level, and the BEC and REC at other levels. It is the role of the union president to coordinate all the campaigns. So there is no danger of going in different directions.

There is a need to train individuals in the structures to be aware of the role of the structures and of himself as an individual. So if all others are detained or dismissed and the structure ceases to exist and he is left alone, he knows what to do. It would be a disaster for him to do nothing. He must know exactly the next step.

Labour Bulletin: *What response have you had from Anglo to your repression report?*

Motlatsi: Their first response was to run a propaganda campaign in the press which tried to make NUM responsible for violence. Secondly, they pushed the code of conduct as an answer to repression, to seem concerned. We are not opposed to a code of conduct. But we don't want a code that is like a disciplinary machinery, we want a code that will improve industrial relations in the mining industry. We are negotiating this with Anglo at the moment.

We believe it would be best to negotiate a code of conduct at indus-

try level, rather than with the different mining houses, but the Chamber of Mines pulled out of that.

We are still battling to get access to mines where Anglo has refused access. They are trying to make impossible conditions, like demanding that mine security or management must be present at all our meetings. Shaftsteward recognition is still withdrawn at many mines. But we believe that through our structures and recruiting, and through our campaigns, they will have to talk. Because NUM is here to stay. This is not the 1940s.

Labour Bulletin: *How does the NUM negotiating team maintain contact with the membership?*

Motlatsi: In the negotiations with the Chamber - we negotiate separately with De Beers and other independent mines - the negotiating team is formed by the national office-bearers and representatives from each branch, so that there should be no problem with report-backs. After each and every negotiation the members of the team will report back to their branches. It goes straight from negotiations down to the branches, rather than through the executive and the RECs.

The number of reps depends on the size of the branch. A branch with 15 - 20,000 members will send 2-3 reps, whereas a branch with 3,000 members will send one. The regional congresses discuss demands, which then go to national congress. There a resolution on demands is adopted. From there the national office-bearers

fill in the resolution, and take it to the NEC. The NEC finalises the demands and sends them to the Chamber and the branches of NUM.

Labour Bulletin: *Last year the pro-business newspapers were saying that at last NUM is more responsible because agreement was reached without a strike. Your response to that?*

Motlatsi: You know what we were in 1988. In this country if you can't move because of repression they say you have come to your senses.

Labour Bulletin: *What do you expect to happen this year?*

Motlatsi: This year we are facing a number of problems. The Chamber has proposed that we negotiate coal separately from gold, which is a problem in itself. They have also proposed to hold separate negotiations for profitable goldmines and marginal goldmines. Their strategy is to divide us. We might have to go into dispute from the beginning.

We are going to have to think carefully and develop a strategy that will work. The new wage policy decided at congress is to demand a national minimum wage, rather than a percentage increase. We are trying to close the gap between wages at different mining houses. NUM is also pushing to narrow the gap between wages in different job categories. We have come with a unifying position. They are coming with a divisive strategy.

Coming to your question about

whether there could be massive action again, there are a number of factors to consider. The industry provokes workers time and again. Mass action cannot be ruled out. Our members will have to decide on that. We are confident that they are ready for action. The major problem is communication between union structures and membership.

But 1989 is the year when the Chamber wants to split the union. We don't have to fight our battle on the terrain of the enemy. We have to set the pace and fight the battle on our terrain. Our policy has already set our terrain, but there is a need to develop strategies within our policy. That is the task of the NEC.

To try and divide our negotiating team into three camps - that is the terrain where they want us to take immediate industrial action, so that they can say, "Look - you are on a profitable mine. We are prepared to pay you. Why are you on strike?"

The Chambers expect strikes. I don't want to anticipate what will happen except to say that we don't have to fight on the enemy terrain.

Labour Bulletin: *So going on strike can also be enemy terrain?*

Motlatsi: A strike cannot be ruled out, it is our last resort. But you have to think how you will conduct a strike. Will you conduct a strike as you did in 1987? The answer is no. The answer is no because after the strike they saw the loop-holes and mistakes they had. We saw the weaknesses and

loop-holes on our side. Because we made quite a number of mistakes, we have to acknowledge that. We have to correct them.

To show that the mining houses realised some of their mistakes: one of the Anglo chairmen, Peter Gush, said that the reason the strike was successful on Anglo mines was because they did not divide senior workers from other workers. They said the reason Goldfields did not go on strike was that they made a clear distinction between supervisory workers and other workers. That is why immediately after the strike Anglo divided the hostels along those lines.

Now senior staff, supervisors and clerks, have their own quarters. So that if ever there is a strike they must be able to use at least part of the workforce. The privileges now of those people are much higher than the rest of the workforce. Management is also reinforcing ethnic lines.

That is why we say we cannot conduct ourselves the same as in 1987. Time and again we have to change strategies. Even if we take action we have to be able to change strategies every day. If we are forced to take action we have to think hard how we will conduct our business.

Labour Bulletin: *You mentioned mistakes made by the union. Can you describe them?*

Motlatsi: Right at the beginning we in the leadership did not plan the timetable of the strike. To be quite honest, we were not aware that the

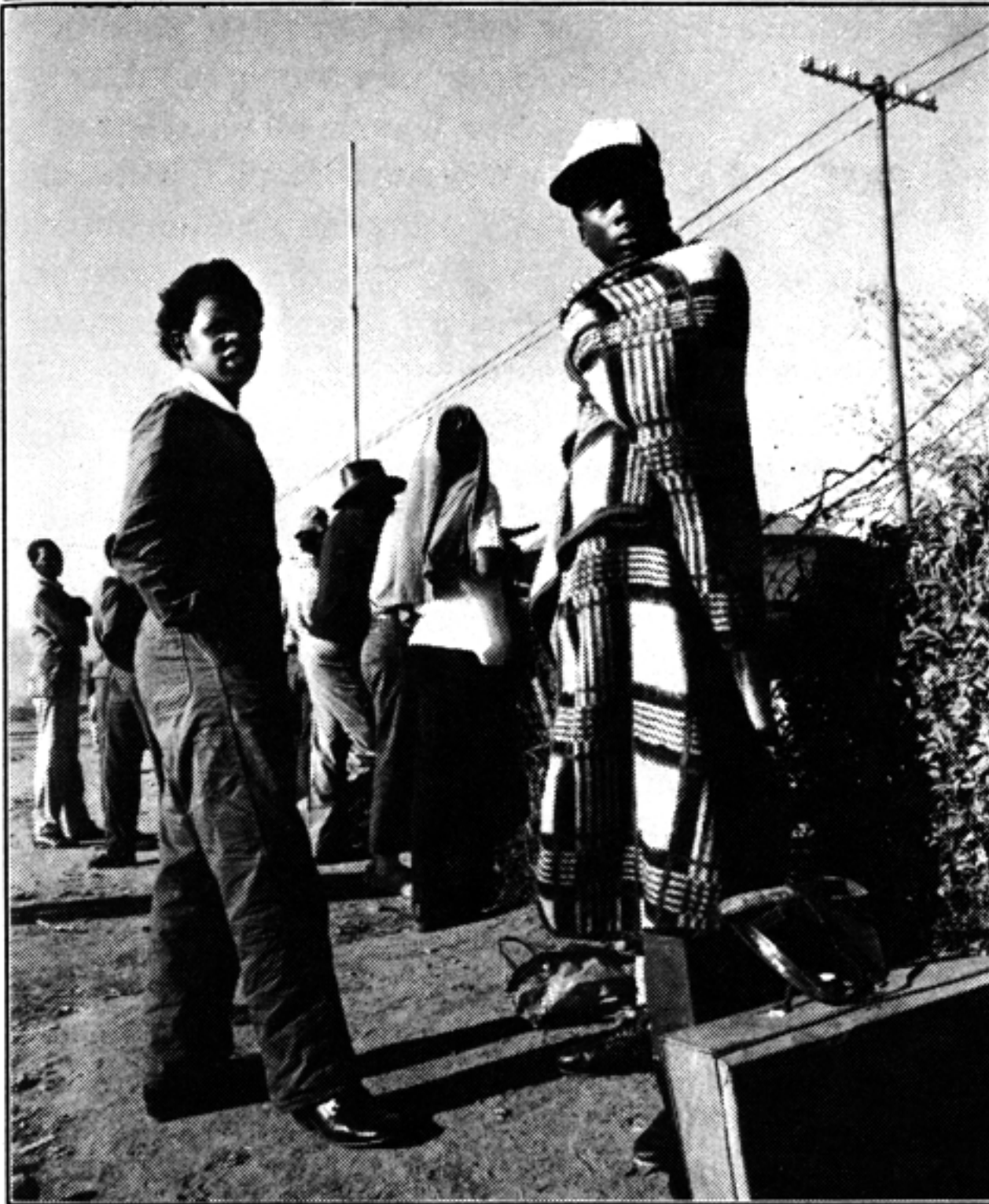
bosses could dismiss as many as 50,000 workers. We did not plan our response to a mass dismissal. We did not plan how to deal with scab labour. As you know the mines use migrant labour from neighbouring states and homelands. We should have planned in advance what to do if they dismissed.

Labour Bulletin: *What lessons did the union learn from the strike?*

Motlatsi: The strike started as a bread and butter issue, but it became political - political in the sense that it involved sovereign neighbouring states which oppose apartheid. We should have made political consultations with these states. Within the country it should have involved the entire mass democratic movement, so that it could mobilise people in the rural areas and all areas where scabs could come from.

What we underestimated, to be quite honest, was the presence of the Chamber in the neighbouring states, in the TEBAs, in the rural areas. That kind of action needed us to man each and every institution of the enemy.

It suits the bosses to have many experienced mineworkers without work in the rural areas and neighbouring states. Then whenever there is a strike they can easily dismiss workers and find scabs who have experience of the mining industry. Immediately after the dismissals they recruited scabs from KwaZulu, but people of that area have no experience of mining. If they were experienced underground the



A lesson learnt - the 'homelands' provide an easy source of unemployed workers during a strike

Photo: Paul Weinberg/Afrapix

time ago. That was very broad. But discussion started there about how we go about nationalisation. Now we have to work out what we mean by that. How do we go about it? All factors will be looked into, and it is a huge job.

Labour Bulletin: *Do you see the blueprint being negotiated with management now, or only after liberation?*

Motlatsi: It can be put forward for negotiations, but I don't think it will achieve much. It will be useful after apartheid. We have

bosses would have had no problem.

Labour Bulletin: *What is the significance of the resolution on drawing up a blueprint for the mining industry?*

Motlatsi: A lot needs to be done. There are so many ideas on this subject. It is very open. But the resolution mandates the NEC to table a blueprint for the industry at the next congress.

As you know we adopted a resolution on nationalising the mines some

already started to look beyond where we are now, to post-apartheid. It's not an easy task, because no-one knows what will take place. But it is our duty to formulate what we want to happen in future.

Let's not say we are fighting apartheid and that's all. We must be able to make the kind of changes that can benefit the people. We must not be like a dog which chases a bus. When the bus stops the dog also stops, because he does not know what he is doing. ☆

Interview: Moses Mayekiso, general secretary of NUMSA

LABOUR BULLETIN spoke to MOSES MAYEKISO after the recent NUMSA congress. Once again in his post as general-secretary of NUMSA, he spoke about the implications of some of the resolutions made at the congress.

Labour Bulletin: *What is the significance of your recent acquittal on treason charges?*

Mayekiso: Firstly we believe trade union members should be involved in community struggles, community organisations, and political organisations. They should be involved in issues that are fought in the communities and join structures like street committees. The judgement is proof that there is nothing wrong with that. It proves that the structures we are advocating in the unions are structures that we can use in the townships.

In the case it became clear that our

aspiration is a socialist society. There is nothing wrong to have socialist aspirations - it proves that we have to be open about our political beliefs and aspirations. The judge commented that blacks don't have political rights, therefore he sees no reason why they can't be involved in peaceful protests like rent boycotts, consumer boycotts and strikes to encourage change and to express our grievances.

This case was a precedent. Should we have been found guilty then many COSATU leaders were going to be found guilty.

Labour Bulletin: *NUMSA was formed through a merger of unions with different*



traditions, styles and political positions. It has grown very rapidly, approximately 43% since it was launched. You have just had your second national congress. What is the actual state of organisation in this giant which is NUMSA?

Mayekiso: We have grown in such a way because we embarked on many campaigns which attracted workers - campaigns like the living wage campaign, political campaigns, and the campaign for my release. People felt they should join this fighting union. They believe in a fighting union. We are the biggest in the metal industry

MOSES MAYEKISO was born in the Cala District in the Transkei in 1948. A member of MAWU when working for Toyota in Wynberg, he joined the union as an organiser after being dismissed during a strike. He played a key role in the November 1984 stayaway, a turning-point in joint community/worker actions. When NUMSA was formed in 1987, he was elected general-secretary, even though he was in jail at the time. He and four others were charged with treason as a result of their involvement in organising the Alex community. They were all acquitted when the judge said that their actions were justified. He has now returned to his post in NUMSA. ☆

because we are the only fighting union, fighting for the aspirations and interests of workers in the industry.

That growth has created problems on the other hand. We've got good structures as far as we are concerned, which encourage accountability and mandates. But because of this growth our structures are not very strong. They are weak. You find that that causes disruption of communication and reportbacks. We still have to strengthen the structures so that we have proper reportbacks and communications.

The three unions brought their expertise, and that also helped our growth. NAAWU brought campaign expertise, MAWU brought organising expertise, and MICWU brought administrative expertise. These different strengths complemented each other. At the moment there is no trace of MAWU, NAAWU or MICWU. I would say we are now stable, the merger has succeeded.

We believe that NUMSA is the most open union politically, open in discussing politics and also open in saying that we can't hide our beliefs about the future society. We believe in a future socialist society. We don't believe that we should hide that.

Labour Bulletin: *Presumably the policy of openness makes it easier to overcome what differences do exist between different traditions in NUMSA?*

Mayekiso: Yes, it does because you discuss things openly.



Mayekiso in Alex - unionists must join community structures, must belong to street committees and get involved in community issues

Photo: Cedric Nunn/Afrapix

The workers were controlling this congress without any interference from officials. Not a single official spoke, except myself giving reports on behalf of the union as a whole. But on resolutions it was just workers. This gives us the belief that working class control is succeeding. Workers' power is succeeding. Worker democracy is succeeding.

Labour Bulletin: *I want to turn to the political policy adopted at the congress. The resolution calls for a centralised structure for the mass democratic movement (MDM), rather than a federal structure. It calls for this to be based on street and area committees. What are the implications of this for the current*

UDF affiliates?

Mayekiso: Current UDF affiliates should exist - the youth organisations, the students organisations, the women's organisations. We do not say there must be no affiliates, no youth organisations and so on - there should be those organisations. UDF affiliates should centralise their structures in order to promote democracy.

When it comes to civic organisations they must be based on street committees, centralised structures and up to the national body. We also believe political organisations should have similar structures. But the UDF is a front so it has to have federal structures. As a front, it should be built of organisations which are based

on centralised democratic structures.

The national civic organisation and COSATU should have a permanent structured alliance. What we envisage is a national student body, a national youth body, a national civic body, a national trade union movement, in alliance with other political organisations.

Labour Bulletin: *There is a federalism, in that the national sectorial organisations are affiliated...?*

Mayekiso:to the alliance. Yes. You can't just get rid of it. What do you do with the students? The students cannot just be merged in that central body. They have got their own problems and they have to have their own organisation to deal with those problems.

The MDM would consist of the alliance of national sectorial organisations plus any political organisation.

Labour Bulletin: *When you say political organisations what sort of organisations are you thinking of?*

Mayekiso: We are thinking of organisations that are close to the working class organisations, that really see eye to eye to with working class organisations, and organisations that believe in non-racialism.

Labour Bulletin: *To come back to this stress on building a centralised civic structure. What prompts NUMSA to think along those lines?*

Mayekiso: You can't depend on organisations that have got loose structures. You find that some organisations exist in name - for example some civics are just a civic of two people. Like the old civic in Alexandra which had no structures at all, but they were affiliated.

UDF would think that they had a strong affiliate, but it was an affiliate of only two people! That is a problem. That is why we believe that organisations - especially civics - should depend on centralised structures, structures that can be accountable to the masses, structures that encourage democracy.

Also, we were encouraged by the centralised structures of COSATU.

The control of the organisation should be with the people themselves, the masses. You find in these loose structures that there is no control, and when it comes to issues they dish decisions to the people. There is no democracy at all. This breeds political and financial corruption and autocracy.

We'll just find pamphlets that there is a boycott, and people know nothing. There was no meeting at all. This creates problems.

I think the structure in Alex encouraged the union a lot. Such centralised structures unite people and people act together because they feel the organisation is ours. That's what is important - they feel the ownership of the organisation. Then they tend to trust it and support it on whatever issues it tackles, whether with the local authorities or the bosses.

Those are good structures for the future society. We don't want a society where there is no accountability of the leadership to the masses. If there are no centralised structures it will be difficult to talk of democracy. There should be structures that can really give mandates to the leadership and control the leadership.

Labour Bulletin: *The political resolution calls for alliances with other sectors of the community. What sort of alliance does NUMSA envisage with these sectors?*

Mayekiso: The taxi owners and some small traders, like the corner shops, we can't take those people as bosses or capitalists. They are part and parcel of the working class, they are organisations like taxi associations, that are closer to the working class. What we are saying is that we must unite those people with us, we must have alliances with them. Those are working class alliances.

I am an individual running this taxi. It feeds my family and I don't get any labour from anybody - it is my labour. These traders - it is just himself and his family, he is not exploiting anybody. They are part and parcel of the working class, they are a sector of the working class.

Labour Bulletin: *What about when you get to someone who is running a fleet of taxis and employing about 30 taxi drivers or someone who has got a chain of supermarkets? How do they fit in?*

Mayekiso: A person who owns a chain of shops employing people is different. The difference is that once you employ a stream of people that you underpay, people who are waking up in the morning working for you, reaping profits from them, you are now a bourgeois. You belong to another class though you are black. We can bring you to the anti-apartheid conference as a bourgeois.

The same applies to the person who has a stream of taxis, who is a tycoon employing a lot of people. He is no longer working, people are working for him. He doesn't belong to the working class, he belongs to a sector of the bourgeois class.

Labour Bulletin: *So he is no longer an element in the MDM?*

Mayekiso: As far as we can define the MDM, no.

Labour Bulletin: *One of the key issues that has been debated over the last year is the issue of a broad anti-apartheid alliance, specifically in the form of the Anti-apartheid Conference (AAC). How does NUMSA see that at this stage?*

Mayekiso: We believe in the AAC. We believe that it will be difficult to get rid of apartheid if we haven't got any such alliances. We must have those broad alliances with people who are anti-apartheid. They may be bourgeois but with the interest of getting rid of apartheid. We must bring in all the forces to fight the common

enemy, apartheid.

Labour Bulletin: *There was an article in Business Day today that said that the differences in COSATU are over broad alliances. It says that some unions such as NUMSA are pushing for a narrow working class alliance, while unions such as NUM are pushing for a broad anti-apartheid alliance.*

Mayekiso: That is not true for NUMSA. NUMSA wants a working class alliance, which I think is what is happening between COSATU and UDF. They are the core - organisations that are the sectors of the working class, or who are very close to the working class and are not antagonistic to the working class, coming together. We are for these organisations coming together, uniting the class itself. We are also for that broad alliance. The person who says that we are not for that is wrong.

Even in that broad alliance, if there is somebody who is very antagonistic to the working class then we would not meet with such a person. Just as we don't want Gatsha next to us in that alliance, we don't want Inkatha in that alliance. The resolution shows that we are for the anti-apartheid alliance, because we say that we can meet with opposition parties in Venda as long as they are not antagonistic to the working class, we can meet with the Transkei Democratic People's Party as long as they are not antagonistic. That is a big broad alliance. They don't have to agree

completely with our policies and principles, but as long as they are not antagonistic, like Inkatha.

Labour Bulletin: *What is the relation between the struggle for socialism and the national democratic struggle?*

Mayekiso: There is apartheid in this country, we can't ignore that. The MDM has to answer how we get rid of apartheid, and also forge ahead towards a better future society. That is why we have alliances.

In that battle for socialism we believe as NUMSA that we are now involved in a MDM, in a mass democratic struggle fighting that apartheid must be abolished. We also believe that it is not a single struggle, this struggle against apartheid. We can't say that I must get rid of apartheid first and then I can think of socialism tomorrow. No. Our struggle is a process. In that process you get rid of apartheid, you get rid of this and that, and in that process you introduce an understanding of socialism.

You also make gains towards socialism in fighting apartheid. Getting rid of apartheid, that's another gain towards socialism. You can't say when you are fighting to get rid of apartheid you are not fighting for socialism. That's ignorance. You can't get socialism if apartheid is still there. Getting rid of apartheid is part and parcel of stages. I believe there are stages. There is no one stage, there is no two stage, there are *stages* towards socialism.



The Freedom Charter - a basic document which unifies

Photo: Labour Bulletin

Labour Bulletin: *The resolution mentioned a working class political programme. What does one mean by a working class political programme, and what is its role?*

Mayekiso: We believe that we always talk of socialism and it has become an empty slogan. We have got our organisations, socialist organisations, but there is no analysis of how are they going to approach the future. And the Freedom Charter, we can't say it is a working class political programme, it is not. It is a document that is unifying.

The working class has got an organisation in South Africa, but we have not seen what programme the working class is to follow to make the socialist dream a reality. We believe

that if we are to succeed in our struggle for socialism we have to be open. The workers and the working class generally have to discuss that programme, have to discuss their future society. They have to build that political programme to give answers to the economic, political and social ills of the capitalist system.

We believe that the Freedom Charter contains the minimum demands and the minimum answers. It is a basic important document to start with. We believe that that programme should contain the maximums and it should be built by all the sectors of the working class.

Some people say, 'Don't talk of class struggle or socialism now, because the workers are not ready.' Or sometimes they say, 'Because it is

dangerous now, our allies will run away from us.' I think that is very, very dangerous, if we talk that language as members of the working class. Yes, members of the bourgeois class can say don't talk of socialism, because they are going to benefit from the ignorance of the working class. If we as the working class say that we should not allow the workers to talk about socialism, that is a crime and hypocrisy against the working class.

If we want the working class to be a clear working class that is going to lead the struggle to the future society, then we shouldn't hide and say that the workers aren't ready to discuss socialism or the class question. We believe that a clear working class will be able to lead. But an unclear working class will never be able to lead and socialism will be from the top to the masses, instead of from the masses upwards. Our openness, organisationally and politically, is paving the way to create a clear political direction.

When you talk of class and socialism some people label you as a workerist. That is nonsense as far as I am concerned, that is not workerism. We should discuss these things, we should be clear. We mustn't be caught up by the situation that caught the Zimbabwean working class, where they are now expecting Mugabe to bring in socialism, not them bringing in socialism themselves.

If socialism is going to come from the bottom, from the masses, they must discuss socialism, they must throw things around and shape up their programme and shape up what

they believe is needed in the future society. Unless we believe as leadership that we are going to impose socialism, which is wrong. Socialism in South Africa will be different, because each country has its own approach. So our own approach will be shaped by the working class itself. I think also SAYCO is also clear on that - we should discuss socialism, we should discuss these things.

Labour Bulletin: *The constitutional guidelines of the ANC are not referred to in the resolutions, but you did mention them in your report to congress. How would NUMSA see the relation between the guidelines and a working class political programme? How do you see the guidelines?*

Mayekiso: There would be a relation between the guidelines and the working class political programme. If the workers discuss their programme they have to discuss that in reality. They must establish their stand from the realities up to the future society they want. The constitutional guidelines are answering the realities of the present.

How should we go about moving our feet forward? It is just like the Freedom Charter, we have to start from the realities. Here is the Freedom Charter, how do we develop now, how do we move to the maximum demands?

If people discuss the guidelines they will be able to say the guidelines should be like this and like that.

That's what we mean by working class leadership, where we comment on the guidelines and then the leadership that drew up the guidelines can be guided. It will be clear how the trade unions or the working class see the guidelines, or how the MDM see the guidelines. The voice of the MDM must be heard. I think the ANC has also encouraged that people must discuss them. So therefore we should.

It depends on us, because we may feel that this amendment is for today and this one is for tomorrow, for maximums. There will be minimums - now let's concentrate on the minimums, and then tomorrow we want this.

That's why we talk of a programme - not a programme to be implemented immediately. But there should be a guide towards the future.

Labour Bulletin: *I want to refer again to the Business Day article, because it stated that the issue of a workers' charter divides the unions in COSATU. It refers to the NUMSA call for a working class programme and says that NUMSA is in the workers charter grouping. Is that so?*

Mayekiso: I think this is important. When we as NUMSA talk of a political programme we are not talking of the workers' charter. The workers themselves can't build political programmes - that would be workerism. If you say workers' charter that means that workers themselves should have their own political programme. We believe that is not true. We believe that the working class must have a politi-

cal programme, not the workers.

If sometimes we talk of the workers' charter, we talk of the workers' charter as something that can just answer the workers' problems like trade union rights, not broad political questions. The workers' charter can answer things that trouble the workers - like the right to strike, the right to negotiate, a living wage. Then the working class political programme must answer the question, what is the future society? What is the political set-up of the future society? So there are two different things.

Labour Bulletin: *That conception of the workers charter is explicitly catered for in the constitutional guidelines.*

Mayekiso: I agree with the guidelines on that score. Definitely.

Labour Bulletin: *You did have a resolution on negotiations. Do you see negotiations as potentially occurring in the near future? What should the trade unions and the MDM be doing to prepare for such a possibility?*

Mayekiso: Firstly, I believe that the solutions to our country's problems will finally come through negotiations. I don't believe that we will be able to get to Pretoria and oust Botha from those buildings.

But I also don't believe that negotiations are near. There will be a negotiated settlement at some stage, but at the present moment those chan-



ANC stalwart and newly-elected NUMSA honorary president, Harry Gwala, listens with COSATU's Jay Naidoo and Sydney Mafumadi at NUMSA's congress

Photo: Labour Bulletin

Labour Bulletin: *That being the position, what should trade unions and the MDM do to prepare for the time when negotiations do occur?*

Mayekiso: We must build our organisations and strengthen the MDM. We must build democratic structures and engage in campaigns on political and economic issues that are facing our society, in order to build power.

ces are nil.

We still have the State of Emergency. We still have the people's organisations banned, the ANC, the SACP. Leaders are incarcerated, Nelson Mandela, Sisulu and others. People are still in exile, Tambo and others, not able to come back because of the violence of the apartheid regime. Our townships are occupied by the police and the army. There is no freedom of speech. There is apartheid and group areas and all apartheid legislation. As long as those things exist I don't believe negotiations are nearer.

As NUMSA we have stated clearly if those minimum conditions are not met we don't think that we should engage in any negotiations.

We must build our organisations so as to have power and control. The political initiative towards negotiations, the concept of negotiations, must come from us. We must control that initiative so as to dictate the conditions. We must not be dictated to by the Americans, the Europeans or the De Klerks.

We should discuss the constitutional guidelines and come up with answers. We must encourage the working class to discuss their future aspirations so that when we get to that position we know the aspirations of all the sectors of society. Then it will be easier to come up with a solution.

The solution may be a mixed economy, but how do you get to that situation if you haven't got the pulse

of the society as a whole? That's why I say those people who are blocking the discussions on class politics and socialism are criminal. How are you going to know how the working class thinks if you don't want to get what they think? How are you going to go for negotiations, on what mandate? People should discuss these things so that the leadership will have a mandate.

We don't say that such aspirations are going to be met. We don't believe socialism must be there tomorrow when we finish negotiations. It won't be like that. But what we are saying is that to arm the leadership, to arm the organisations, the people must be free to discuss the constitutional guidelines. If they want to discuss a political programme they must discuss it, so that everything is open and we will come up with a solution.

We don't want the organisations and leaders to come with a solution that is still going to be opposed at some stage, where you find there is still conflict after such a solution. We have been fighting for 300 years, we don't want to fight again. We want to have proper political rights so that we can change society as we go along.

Labour Bulletin: *What will the role of mass organisations be during actual negotiations?*

Mayekiso: Those organisations will be belonging to an alliance. Through that alliance they will be very influential. If we want a proper solution, then all those organisations with a mass

base have to be represented at those negotiations. They will be trying to control the pace and strategy of negotiations. They will be trying to set out what is the answer for this country, what are the political, economic and social answers for this country.

Labour Bulletin: *What is the significance of the sanctions resolution adopted at the congress?*

Mayekiso: We believe that South Africa must be pressurised to get rid of apartheid. We have tried all sorts of pressures and the South African regime doesn't want to listen. Therefore we believe that the international community should apply sanctions against South Africa.

Labour Bulletin: *Is there any re-think in relation specifically to disinvestment? Many of the disinvestments have the consequence of strengthening South African companies, often weakening the position of workers in this country. Doubts have been expressed, that disinvestment has not really contributed much towards damaging or isolating apartheid. So the question has been raised isn't it time to reconsider our position on disinvestment?*

Mayekiso: I don't think it is time. I think that's why South Africa is trying to get answers - although they are afraid of facing the true answers. Workers do suffer because of disinvestment, because they lose jobs. But workers are prepared to sacrifice - they

have been sacrificing for years, dying in the mines, dying everywhere, being retrenched. There were millions and millions unemployed whilst these multinationals were around making apartheid thrive. We believe disinvestment is going to hamper the apartheid regime and capital in this country. Well, equally it is going to hamper us as workers, but it will hamper us for a just cause, a good cause. We believe that we can sacrifice such things.

Labour Bulletin: *How does NUMSA view the workers summit? What are the prospects of unity with NACTU? Specifically how do you view the formation of the new metal union affiliated to NACTU?*

Mayekiso: We have heard of the formation of this union and we regret there should be another union cropping up instead of bringing the metal workers together. But we are open to meeting that union to at the end of the day form one metal union in this country. We will co-operate with it in order that we may succeed in having one union in the metal industry.

We as NUMSA are going to encourage summits, encourage co-operation between COSATU and NACTU. We believe that at the end of the day NACTU and COSATU should come together and form one giant federation. We will do all that we can to make that a success. I think the first summit was a success though no significant decisions were made. But the mere fact that unions could come together and discuss the LRA

and other problems - it was the first time in the history of the workers movement in this country.

Labour Bulletin: *Although at the workers summit half of NACTU wasn't there. In the light of that what are the prospects of developing unity?*

Mayekiso: Some people in NACTU want this unity, judging by their attendance even after NACTU had decided against attending. Also people in NACTU say that we have got a problem here and there - but there are no significant problems. The leadership is still not sure that this is the right move. We should convince the leadership of both COSATU and NACTU that it is in the best interests of the workers to come together so that there are no suspicions. I am optimistic. I think there are prospects.

Labour Bulletin: *In your report as general secretary you mentioned several problems in COSATU that made NUMSA members pessimistic, and people withdrew from some structures. You also said that the situation had improved and the people are more optimistic. Could you expand on this issue?*

Mayekiso: Before and since the formation of COSATU there were a lot of suspicions. The merger brought together unions from different political backgrounds and different traditions. Also, there was no openness. What you found in the meetings was just people attacking each other.

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No open debates were encouraged, with the result that there was a lot of antagonism.

NUM and NUMSA were at loggerheads. That was uncalled for. NUM would go there thinking we would get

sues, participating in structures, and suspicions are really dwindling. People are becoming one. They are understanding that they belong to one federation. They've got the same interests and aspirations as workers.



Unity is crucial in the struggle to achieve common goals - a section of a huge NUMSA banner at the congress

Photo: Labour Bulletin

NUMSA, NUMSA would go there thinking we would get NUM. That antagonism was unnecessary. Because there was no political openness inside COSATU, it was our fault, the leadership's fault.

That situation made many people withdraw from the structures, withdraw from shopsteward councils, just criticising organisations unnecessarily. That was bad. Things have improved a lot, because there is openness up to a point. People are discussing is-

Not that then there were such big problems that there could be a split in COSATU - no. But there were tensions and and fights. Also we as leadership were not handling issues wisely enough, which sometimes causes splits in the unions. I think that the leadership of the unions in COSATU is developing and they are careful of creating splits, and they handle issues in a mature way.

There is now respect for democracy. Whereas before if one believed

the position was wrong he just fought and fought, with the result that in the end he had to walk out because his views were not accepted.

Labour Bulletin: *In the past the union has felt a tension between negotiating at industrial council level and company level. In practice company in-house agreements threaten to weaken united action at the industry level, because people felt that they had their own agreements and their own wages and so on. Is there a way of overcoming that and was it discussed at the congress at all?*

Mayekiso: Not directly. We reaffirmed that national negotiations are the best, because we have got mass strength backed by all the sectors and workers in the industry. But also we believe you can't get rid of company negotiations. There are issues not covered by the industrial council that should be negotiated at company level. Conditions in factories are also sometimes different, so some things have to be negotiated at plant level.

There are difficulties, because the companies negotiating at industrial council level don't want negotiations at plant level and company level. You find that some companies negotiate at company level and sometimes they pull out of industrial council negotiations.

We can't run around with all these factories, negotiating factory by factory. That is time consuming and crazy. We want to consolidate the national negotiations in order to bring

together the workers en masse.

We want to negotiate at all these levels, we don't want restrictions. The best level is the national level, because you establish minimums for the industry. You are able to negotiate for the unorganised and the weakly organised. If you negotiate at the company level you can negotiate with the strong companies but not with the weak ones. In plants also, you can negotiate with the strong ones but not the weak ones. With national bargaining, then organised plants boost the unorganised and the weakly organised with their strength.

Labour Bulletin: *In the actual congress there was a delegation from Metal and Allied Namibian Workers Union (MANWU). What is the relation between NUMSA and MANWU?*

Mayekiso: There is a close relationship. We have had many meetings and we are co-operating with each other. There will be an exchange of organisers, there will be an exchange of experienced shopstewards. Because we believe they are our comrades and they are still trying to stand up. We believe they are fighting a just struggle. They are trying to introduce democracy. We believe that we are faced with one apartheid regime and one capitalist class, and therefore we should fight together for change. Their battles are our battles, our battles are their battles.

Labour Bulletin: *The independence of Namibia, what effect*

will that have on South Africa?

Mayekiso: Spiritually, emotionally and in reality it will be a political gain, also democratically. But economically I think Namibia is going to depend 80% or 90% on South Africa. When I visited that country many things I saw there are products from South Africa. So I think it is going to depend on South Africa. Their future is linked with our future, that's why we should build these links. By them getting the vote they are not going to be free until we are free. It shows the importance of the slogan, "Working class of the world unite!"

Labour Bulletin: *What are the most urgent tasks facing NUMSA, facing the working class and facing the anti-apartheid struggle?*

Mayekiso: As NUMSA we are faced with the present negotiations. We want to get as much as can. Another task is to push our political understanding to influence COSATU. As a big union we believe that we should be of influence. We should be able to sell our resolutions to other unions in COSATU.

As the working class we should concentrate on building democratic structures, just as in NUMSA we believe we should strengthen our structures. We have had good campaigns - the Living Wage Campaign, the anti-LRA campaign. We expected to have high success in those campaigns, but because of weak structures we could not. We should build structures anew,

and get the community to also build structures and introduce democracy.

A problem facing the working class is that if you talk of class and socialism you get labelled workerist. Yes, if you preach that the trade unions or a workers' charter are going to liberate us, that is workerist. But if people believe that there should be alliances, there should be struggles in the townships and in the factories and so on, you can't tell me that person is a workerist. We should clarify these things. Because people are not clear.

We should support all the progressive organisations that are trying to thrash out answers to the future of this country. Not to point fingers in saying that they are populists or whatever. Some people term the organisations that are involved in community struggles and political struggles as populist organisations. Ultra-leftism is always saying that the populists this and that. That is wrong. We should work together. We should be in one pot and destroy apartheid and go further. Labels control debates and delay progress. That is why we say, Down with sectarianism!

We are involved in the anti-apartheid struggle as part of the whole working class struggle, therefore we should be clear in that struggle where we are going. We are getting rid of apartheid and after that what is going to happen? People should grapple with those questions themselves, not leaders wanting to impose their views. Leaders must give leadership.

Those are the tasks that we are faced with, political tasks. ☆

Congress resolutions



NUMSA: Political policy

Noting:

i. The NUMSA launching congress in 1987 passed political policy resolutions entitled "The Freedom Charter and the Struggle for Socialism" and "The Principles of Working Class Alliance";

ii. we have not taken our resolutions seriously and put them into practice;

iii. our resolutions call for the discussion and a development of a working class programme of action for unifying and strengthening the working class and showing a clear way forward. This has not been done.

Believing:

1. That despite the most vicious repression under emergency rule, the spirit of defiance and the mood to resist remains strong amongst the mass of the working class as evidenced in

the June protest and the October elections;

2. the organisations of the mass democratic movement have been effectively smashed by the emergency repression throughout most parts of South Africa, and consequently there are no clearly defined structures with mass support in our communities with which we could forge a disciplined united front alliance;

3. that organised workers have got a duty and responsibility to rebuild organisation among the working class masses in the communities that can provide the foundation for the forging of the national mass united front alliance of all democratic working class organisations;

4. that all attempts to broaden the alliance by including political representatives of capital, homeland opposition parties and all other forces outside of the mass democratic movement only serve to confuse, weaken and distract organised workers from our principle task of building the mass united front of working class forces within the democratic movement.

NUMSA's analysis of the present situation is set out in the Introduction to these Resolutions. In view of this,

Numsa resolves:

1. To reaffirm the 1987 political policy resolution of NUMSA in respect of the Freedom Charter as a programme of minimum demands, the urgency of a mass united front al-

We have not included the introduction because of a shortage of space.

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liance of the working class in the struggle for democracy and socialism, the urgent need for a Working Class Political Programme and its discussion at all levels of our organisation;

2. to re-affirm our belief in the leading role of the working class in the struggle for democracy and socialism, where worker's control of government and industry will be established in a liberated South Africa;

3. consult with COSATU and the democratic movement at large with a view to developing new tactics to rebuild the Mass Democratic Movement in the community by:

3.1 Rebuilding the structures of the democratic movement from Federalism to Centralism - every street shall have a street committee democratically elected; every area an area committee: every town, a local general council; every region, a regional council of elected representatives from all towns. The centralised democratic movement shall be built from elected representatives of the Regional Committees;

3.2 COSATU with our allies should initiate and lead the transformation and rebuilding of the Mass Democratic Movement on this basis.

3.3 The trade union movement shall retain its independence and structures.

3.4 COSATU should employ full-time project organisers to facilitate the rebuilding of structures.

4. COSATU should then forge a

permanent disciplined alliance with these democratic community structures at local, regional and national levels.

5. In rebuilding local and regional structures, COSATU and the Democratic Movement should use local and regional issues. The struggles and activities around these local and regional issues should form the priority in rebuilding the democratic movement.

6. The Centralised Mass Democratic Movement structures shall be free to form sub-structures of youth or women at all levels as the need arises.

7. At local and regional levels, the democratic organisations of the community and the working class shall be free to form tactical alliances with anti-apartheid organisations of other sectors of the community, such as taxi owners and traders. These alliances should be ad hoc alliances depending on local conditions.

8. We reject any alliance, whether tactical or strategic with representatives of big capital, homeland opposition parties and tri-cameral and local government structures until and unless they have shown in action that they support the principles, policy and strategy of the Mass Democratic Movement.

9. COSATU with its allies should be the driving force for the transformation and rebuilding of the Centralised Mass Democratic Movement. The structures of the movement should be open to any oppressed and exploited resident who is elected to a street committee, irrespective of political persuasion, ideology or affiliation. ☆



NUM: Constitutional guidelines

Noting that:

a) The apartheid regime and the racial policies of the National Party have sown deep division and encouraged inter-racial hostilities;

b) the National Party has manipulated cultural and language differences amongst the people of South Africa to enforce division and protect white minority rule;

c) under the brutal racist regime there is no guarantee of fundamental human rights of all citizens forming the majority of the population in this country due to the colour of their skins;

d) regional conferences should be called with COSATU and other organisations to fully discuss the Constitutional Guidelines;

e) exploitation of the working class continues unabated;

f) Namibia is on the verge of getting their liberation from oppression and South Africa will be the only country in this region left under apartheid and capitalism;

g) the panic-stricken white minority ruling clique is presently experiencing the worst division ever

since the Nationalists came to power in 1948. This is evidenced by the declaration of the permanent state of emergency, detention without trial, brutal murders and incarceration of authentic leaders and activists.

Believing that:

a) The apartheid constitution was not aimed to protect the interest and basic human rights of the majority of South Africans;

b) apartheid and capitalism can be crushed if a re-structuring process of the so-called state based on the Freedom Charter can begin now, aimed at achieving a non-racial society and thereby provide a firm basis for national reconciliation and co-operation between the different communities;

c) the exploitation of workers can be ended in a dispensation where the means of production belong to the working class.

Therefore resolves that:

a) Discussions can be started by the mass democratic movement with a view to shaping a democratic constitutional dispensation in South Africa;

b) these discussions must venture around the Constitutional Guidelines as proposed by the African National Congress;

c) NUM forms local structures where mineworkers will start discussing the proposed Constitutional Guidelines and solicit participation from other COSATU affiliates;

d) regional conferences must be

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called with COSATU and other organisations to discuss the Constitutional Guidelines. ☆



ACTWUSA: Worker Charter

Noting:

1. Pressure on the South African regime, both internally and externally, to abandon apartheid has never been more intense;
2. the elimination of apartheid is an important part of the struggle to attain a society where workers will control their own lives;
3. virtually all organisations, other than worker organisations, have adopted guidelines for a new constitution for South Africa, to replace the current racist one;
4. that COSATU as the leading voice of organised workers in the trade union movement ought to debate a resolution in which workers' constitutional rights are adequately protected;
5. that the Freedom Charter, while being a historic document which raises many issues fundamental to all oppressed in South Africa, is no substitute for clearly spelt out protections of minimum worker rights which ought to be included in any genuine

democratic constitution for South Africa if it is to enjoy the respect of organised workers.

Resolves:

To initiate debate widely within the union and within COSATU on the adoption of a Worker Charter which will formulate in detail the protections sought by workers to be included in the laws and constitution of South Africa, which Charter should include the following fundamental worker rights, which rights shall be entrenched rights, not capable of being suspended even during a state of emergency:

1. All workers are free to join the union of their choice.
2. No state shall prescribe the constitution of any union, which shall be determined entirely by the members of that union.
3. All employers are obliged to recognise a trade union chosen by the majority of workers in any establishment, and such recognition shall include the following:
 - a) no victimisation of workers on the grounds of union membership or participation in union activities;
 - b) a requirement to bargain collectively, and in good faith;
 - c) reasonable guaranteed paid time off for elected shop stewards to participate fully in all affairs of the trade union movement;
 - d) full disclosure of all financial and other information about the enterprise to all to meet any demand made, or to be made, by workers;

e) other reasonable organisational facilities to unions, such as unfettered rights of access, inspections of plants to ensure minimum regulations are complied with, unrestricted use of notice boards for union notices and the right to hold meetings at all establishments.

4. All workers have the right to strike in support of any demand which their union has declared official in terms of the constitution of such union and no worker shall be dismissed as a result of such a strike.

5. All workers are guaranteed the right to peaceful picketing during any strike.

6. No worker may have his/her services unfairly terminated by an employer. Should any worker have his/her services unfairly terminated, such worker shall be entitled to full reinstatement on the same terms as before the termination.

7. All industrial disputes requiring adjudication shall be resolved through a jointly-appointed arbitrator or a judge whose appointment has been jointly agreed between organised labour and employers.

8. Worker participation in the management of establishments shall be set out in detail in law, with a separation of rights at public-owned and privately-owned enterprises. In public-owned enterprises, at least half of the management board shall be appointed by workers. The articles of such enterprises shall commit themselves to promoting worker control of the enterprise in all their activities. In privately-owned enterprises, delegates

elected by workers shall sit on management boards and shall be entitled to attend all management meetings where decisions are made which affect the workers. In both instances, the worker-appointed delegates shall be subject to recall in terms of the constitution of the union concerned.

9. Workers in all establishments are entitled to require their employer to terminate the services of any worker or manager on fair grounds.

10. The trade union movement shall control all social welfare funds which relate exclusively to workers, such as the Unemployment Insurance Fund, Workman's Compensation insurance and national sick funds.

11. The trade union movement shall be entitled to establish political funds and publish newspapers, which may be used to promote policies and laws which are to the advantage of the working class.

12. No laws governing conditions of work (such as the Income Tax laws, Pensions Act, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Labour Relations Act, Machinery and Occupational Safety Act, Unemployment Insurance Act, Public Holidays Act, Mines and Works Act etc) shall be made by the state without prior negotiations with the union movement. In addition, workers shall be entitled through their unions, to negotiate with all employers nationally on the minimum demands of organised workers. In the course of such negotiations, all the rights set out in this Charter, in particular the right to strike, shall apply. ☆

Unity in COSATU

by KARL VON HOLDT

"I don't like the way we are debating this point, comrades," said a shopsteward at the Wits regional congress of COSATU. "One group puts forward their position, and then simply repeats it every time they speak. The other group simply smashes the first and then puts forward its own position. There is no movement, and we do not listen to each other. We must listen to the other views and then criticise those views constructively. We must test our positions by debating, with the aim of coming to an agreement that one position is best. Otherwise we will never find unity."

The shopsteward was speaking at a regional congress late last year. He spoke with great passion and seriousness at a point when the debate was becoming heated. After his words the spirit of the debate was more comradely. This is a small incident, but it is a sign of the increasing maturity and unity within the federation.

Harry Gwala, former Robben Island prisoner and activist in the SACP, the ANC and SACTU, was guest speaker at both the NUM congress and the NUMSA congress. He addressed the former on behalf of NUM's honorary president, Nelson Mandela. And at the NUMSA congress Gwala himself was elected

honourary president of the union. At a symbolic level, this is also a sign of increasing unity in COSATU.

Even more important, there is a growing consensus within COSATU on the key issues facing the mass democratic movement (MDM). There are of course differences too, but now the possibility exists for debating these and resolving them within a common perspective.

The interviews with Motlatsi and Mayekiso show this common perspective very clearly. Judging from what they say, from the congress resolutions, and from keynote speeches by COSATU and UDF speakers, the following are seen as the key issues



Delegates at the NUMSA 1989 congress

Photo: Labour Bulletin

facing the MDM:

- rebuilding and strengthening the MDM itself;
- increasing co-operation between COSATU, NACTU and other unions, particularly around the Labour Relations Act (LRA);
- building a broad anti-apartheid alliance;
- campaigning against state repression;
- clarifying the strategy of the MDM on possible negotiations;
- initiating discussion on the constitutional guidelines of the ANC;
- supporting the struggle of SWAPO and NUNW for genuine independence of Namibia.

This list of issues shows a concern with defending and rebuilding, as well as a confidence that there are several fronts on which the mass movement can take the initiative and keep the state on the retreat.

Anti-apartheid alliance

One of the most controversial issues in the past has been the idea of a broad anti-apartheid alliance. The NUM congress resolved that COSATU and UDF should form the core of an anti-apartheid coalition. Some observers have interpreted the resolution adopted at the NUMSA congress as rejecting a broad alliance in favour of a narrower working class alliance (*Business Day*, 26.5.89).

However, in a six page introduction to the resolutions NUMSA states that, "Political actions which isolate [the apartheid] state are an essential and necessary task in which NUMSA must play an active role." It goes on to say that while "Capitalist organisations can play no part in building the organisations of the working class," "in certain circumstances elements of capital may play a part in removing apartheid. Through political analysis, open debate and democratic decision-making, we shall decide how to combine with other organisations."

The general secretary of the union makes it clear in the interview with *Labour Bulletin* that NUMSA sees a broad alliance as necessary for ending apartheid. He stresses - as does the president of NUM - the difference between that broad alliance and the

tighter alliance of mass-based and predominantly working class organisations, the MDM. There would seem then to be common ground between NUM and NUMSA on this issue.

There may well be debate over how broad the alliance should go. This was hotly debated around the convening of the Anti-apartheid Conference last year. The NUMSA resolutions seem to caution against broadening the alliance too far. But the NUM resolution on this issue, while it does not specify who should be part of the coalition, also implies that there should be limits by referring to "the relevant progressive forces that have been to Lusaka".

Could this anti-apartheid coalition include the Democratic Party? Motlati mentions Wynand Malan, and important sections of the DP have been to Lusaka. But if the DP puts candidates up for the coloured and Indian constituencies in the general election there will probably be no chance of an alliance.

Charters and constitutional guidelines

ACTWUSA, at its recent Special National Congress, resolved to initiate discussion in COSATU about a workers' charter. In the past a workers' charter has been seen as an alternative to the Freedom Charter, and there has been heated debate and division over the idea.

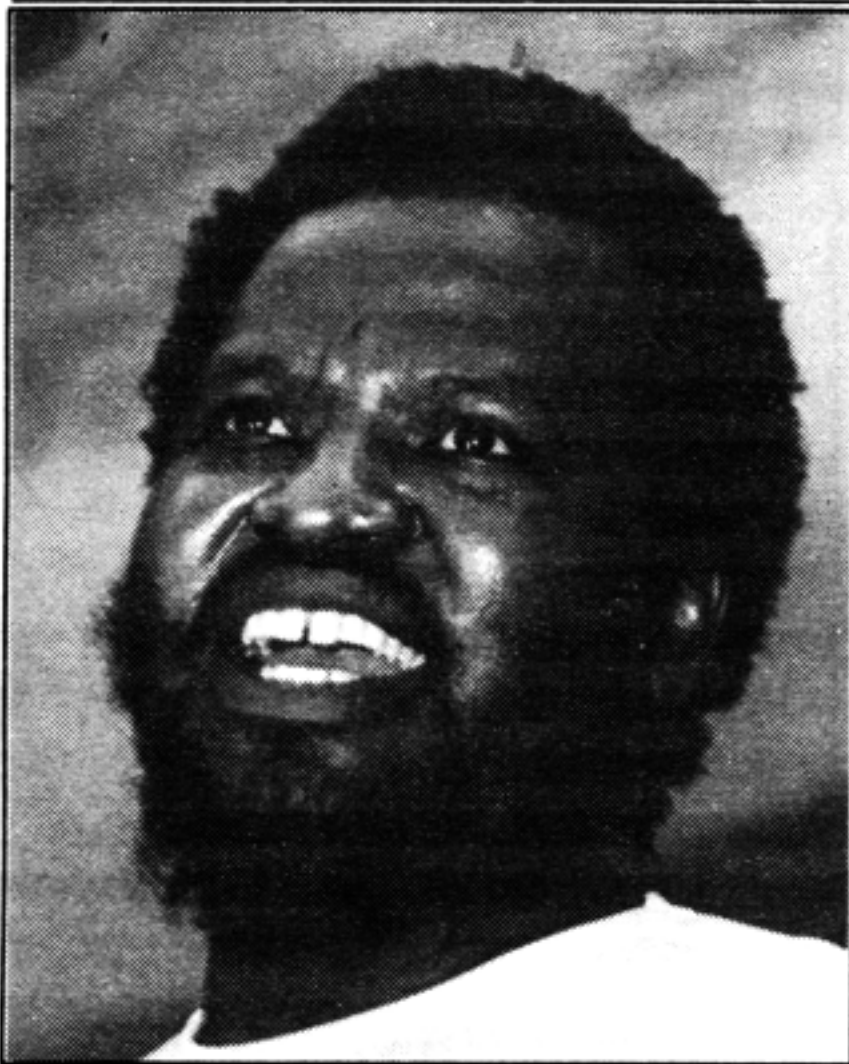
Some observers have seen the ACTWUSA resolution as a sign of fresh division in COSATU. *Business*

Day went so far as to argue that, "A COSATU union's attitude to the drafting of a 'Workers' Charter' has become a critical symbolic indication of where it stands in the debate" about socialism and alliances. It also adds that supporters of the workers' charter include NUMSA.

Mayekiso rejects this, and draws a distinction between a workers' charter and a working class political programme (which is called for in the NUMSA resolution). Mayekiso argues that a workers charter would cover issues directly facing workers, rather than "broad political questions," and implies that such a document would be useful.

An examination of the ACTWUSA resolution shows that their view seems to be similar to Mayekiso's. The resolution calls for drafting a charter which will guarantee the right to organise, to strike, to negotiate, and so on. ACTWUSA also resolves that such a charter should give workers the right to sit on management boards of private and state-owned companies, and to participate in management decisions. In state-owned enterprises 'workers control' will be developed.

This resolution does not in itself call for a socialist society or a capitalist society. It talks only about workers' rights at the workplace. If a post-apartheid government initiates a widescale programme of nationalisation under working class leadership, then the workers' charter would be part of a process of building socialism. It is interesting to compare ACTWUSA's resolution with wor-



NUM's James Motlatsi

Photo: NUM

kers' rights in communist China. (see article in this issue.)

If, however, a post-apartheid government were to limit itself to establishing a social democracy, then the charter envisaged by ACTWUSA would point to some kind of participation in capitalism similar to the West German system of co-determination.

ACTWUSA's resolution says nothing about these "broad political questions" and so it cannot be "socialist" compared to the Freedom Charter. ACTWUSA clearly states that it is not an alternative to the Freedom Charter, but an elaboration of workers' rights.

Rather than being a factor of division as *Business Day* suggests, the workers' charter as put forward by ACTWUSA could be a valuable factor of unity. ACTWUSA points out that a workers' charter is referred to in the constitutional guidelines of the

ANC. The union believes that the constitutional guidelines are more unifying than the Freedom Charter, because they call for broad debate (although the guidelines themselves say that the Freedom Charter should be part of a future constitution).

Since almost all organisations in the MDM are calling for mass discussion of the guidelines, and since for unions the issue of workers' rights after liberation is especially important; since the guidelines themselves refer to a workers' charter, and as pointed out in *Labour Bulletin* 14.1 the SACP has also endorsed the idea of a workers charter along the lines suggested by ACTWUSA, it is difficult to imagine any union in COSATU opposing the idea.

Shaping the future

Clearly unions are emphasising the need to discuss concretely the shape of a future society. The NUM congress resolved to start "an intensive debate in all structures of the union... leading to a clear blueprint on how the mining industry should be run." This resolution is even more detailed than the workers' charter: "the blue print must deal with mineral production, new technology, miners' housing, the future of the industry, health and safety, wages, control of the industry by workers, labour requirements of the industry, development of new mines, development of finished products from mined minerals."

The apartheid state has shown it-

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self incapable of rescuing South Africa from chronic political and economic crisis. The MDM continues to broaden its support and find new ways of resisting. Local and international forces have begun to place a negotiated settlement on the agenda. These developments are forcing unions and mass organisations to think more seriously about how transfer of power to the majority will be achieved. These developments have also revealed the range and complexity of forces struggling for influence in South Africa, and the enormous difficulties facing any transition to socialism.

There is an increasingly coherent common perspective on these issues. Abstract debates about socialism versus national democracy have given way to concrete discussions about transition to a democratic society in which the needs and aspirations of the masses can be met. This in itself is having a unifying effect.

Rebuilding the mass democratic movement

NUMSA's resolution deals in some detail with the need to rebuild the MDM in the communities. The resolution states that: "The organisations of the mass democratic movement have been effectively smashed by the emergency repression throughout most parts of South Africa, and consequently there are no clearly defined structures with mass support in our communities with which we could forge a disciplined united front al-



ACTWUSA president Amon Ntuli

Photo: ACTWUSA Worker News

liance." It calls for COSATU and its allies to build centralised structures based on street, area, town, region and national committees.

The NUM resolution on repression also notes that "due to a lack of structures, unity and/or consolidation, we have been unable to resist... brutal repression," and calls on progressive organisations to form street, block and shaft committees. However, it does not propose a specific way of doing this. Motlatsi also stresses the survival and continuity of organisation and resistance, rather than their destruction.

The NUMSA resolution seems to imply replacing the current structures in the community with new ones (see *New Nation*, 20.5.89). But Mayekiso explains that NUMSA is arguing for a restructuring of UDF affiliates to form centralised, national organisations in the student, youth, women's, civic and other sectors.

This view is likely to find widespread support. The UDF itself had decided to move in this direction in

1987, but was seriously hampered by the emergency repression. Despite this, SAYCO was launched as a national youth organisation in 1987 - only to be restricted in February 1988.

This points to the limitation of the NUMSA resolution: national organisation in the community has been repeatedly banned by the state. COSAS was banned in 1985, and regional student structures were restricted during 1988. SANSCO and SAYCO were restricted, together with UDF, at the beginning of 1988. The question this poses is - how to build national structures under the state of emergency? The model of trade unions does not help very much, because unlike community organisations unions have the open legal space to operate.

All in all, though, it is clear that unions are doing a lot of hard thinking on these questions, and there is a wealth of different perspectives and ideas. Debate on this area should be fruitful.

Are there differences?

I have stressed the common ground emerging within COSATU for two reasons. Firstly, it has been the major trend since last years' Special National Congress. Secondly, it is extremely significant because it is enabling the federation to act in a unified manner.

This trend within COSATU is part of a broader process of unification of forces opposed to apartheid. COSATU is working more closely

with UDF affiliates; COSATU and NACTU are co-operating, especially on the LRA; and building a broad anti-apartheid alliance seems to be firmly on the agenda.

Within this common ground, however, there are still different emphases. NUMSA stresses the weakness of organisation in the community, and the difficulty of building links because of this. NUM stresses the survival and adaptability of community organisation and struggle, while also recognising the need to rebuild. NUMSA appears more cautious about how broad the anti-apartheid alliance should go; NUM resolves to send a union delegation to the governments of West Germany, England and the US, to present them with a full set of apartheid laws and demand that they isolate the apartheid regime. NUMSA emphasises the question of socialism and class; NUM emphasises the Freedom Charter, resolving that it "must remain our guideline in the struggle for political and economic liberation".

Economic crisis and political crisis

Underlying these different emphases is a different approach to analysing the current situation in South Africa. Within NUMSA there is a stress on the economic dimensions of the crisis. The carefully argued "Introduction to Congress Resolutions" analyses the "accumulation crisis" of South African capitalism, which "restricts the extent of social and

economic reforms and ensures that reforms and repression will have to continue side by side."

The "Introduction" goes on to argue that the apartheid state and capital are developing policies and strategies which will weaken the working class by dividing it. This is the 30%/70% society. 30% of the oppressed people, including a privileged layer of the working class, will have access to high wages, skilled jobs, education, housing and amenities, pensions, medical aid etc. The other 70% will be condemned to bad jobs, jobs in deregulated or informal sectors, or no jobs at all; to living in shacks or bushes; they will have little access to education, skills, health care or social amenities (see Alec Erwin, "Towards a planned economy", in *SALB* 14.1).

Thus, in NUMSA's analysis, the central issue facing the working class is of unifying and organising its different groupings - "whether it is employed or unemployed, in factories, small businesses or hawkers, young or old, man or woman, skilled or unskilled, urban or rural, white or black."

This analysis is not only NUMSA's. It is based on the extremely important economic trends project which was commissioned by COSATU and influences the thinking of all its affiliates. NUMSA, however, has gone further in trying to deal with these problems than other unions. It is setting the pace in trying to develop strategies for negotiating benefits such as housing, pensions and medical aid in a way that does not deepen divisions in the working class.

This perspective is critically important. If the trade unions and community organisations cannot unify the working class and overcome the material divisions fostered by the state and capital, the struggle for liberation will be weakened and post-liberation reconstruction will be more difficult.

On the other hand, unions such as NUM place more emphasis on the political dimensions of South Africa's crisis. They stress the need to unify all sections and classes of the oppressed. They refer to splits in the ruling bloc, tensions and divisions in the Nationalist Party, the need to isolate apartheid nationally and internationally, and to build the ideological and political hegemony of the MDM as the only force capable of solving South Africa's problems. In short, they stress what may be called the national question.

This perspective is also vitally important. Apartheid cannot be uprooted from South Africa without political and ideological strategies and campaigns which unify the oppressed, divide the ruling bloc and isolate apartheid.

It is these different approaches that underlie the different emphases within COSATU. However, they are different emphases, not antagonistic positions. NUMSA recognises the significance of the political crisis of apartheid, and NUM recognises the importance of building and unifying the working class around a socialist perspective. Thus differences are likely to strengthen and complement each other, rather than create divisions. ☆

Workers and the community

CHEMICAL WORKERS from the Phalaborwa local describe the community struggles in their area in the period 1984-86. They draw the link between these struggles and the political policy adopted by their union, CWIU.

The process of unionisation in Phalaborwa was initiated by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in April 1984, and after gaining ground the workers from Fedmis-Phalaborwa also displayed the interest of joining the union. The NUM organiser then contacted the office of the South African Chemical Workers Union (SACWU), as both unions were affiliates of the then Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA).

The two unions then developed a practical working relationship and in some stages they were calling for joint general meetings to promote trade union education. In October 1985 NUM disaffiliated from CUSA

and affiliated to COSATU. In February 1986 the Phalaborwa branch of SACWU also disaffiliated, and joined the COSATU affiliate, CWIU.

Organs of people's power

In 1985, rudimentary organs of people's power emerged all over Phalaborwa. This was a direct response to

the harassment of students who were the leading force for democratically elected SRCs. Reactionary school committees were colluding with the police, and generally meetings of workers and students were violently disrupted. Parents were also prevented



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from discussing the schooling crisis by the school committees in collaboration with the police.

The Fedmis-Phalaborwa workers as part of the Phalaborwa community were effectively participating in those structures of people's power. These channels enabled them to mix with the UDF affiliates. One of our shopstewards was serving in the executive committee of the Namakgale Parents Crisis Committee, a UDF affiliate. Also four shopstewards were responsible for the launching of the once active Namakgale Youth Congress, also a UDF affiliate.

During a strike in Feb 1985, Fedmis workers also organised and ran the Operation Hunger Feeding Scheme for themselves and the communities of Namakgale, Makhushane, Maseke, Lulekani and Mashimale. Upon their returning to work, the whole project was run by a committee comprising two representatives from each of the communities mentioned above. The emphasis has always been that those in the communities who benefit from the scheme should be destitutes and unemployed people. This is so even up to the present day.

The arrival of the UDF

In order to understand this situation, you have to understand how the UDF came into our area.

In 1976 to 1982 Phalaborwa like other areas in the far north was dominated by black consciousness (BC). There were no other organisations not

adhering to the black consciousness philosophy. Then in 1983 the UDF was launched, and in 1984 the student's struggle for democratically elected SRCs was launched, and Phalaborwa was no exception. There were debates among students and youth about the appropriate home between BC organisations and the UDF.

The late Comrade Alf Nkadimeng who was working for SAAWU [SA Allied Workers Union] was also involved in organising workers who fell outside the scope of NUM, SACWU and CCAWUSA. He used to come with Turfloop students and comrades from UDF Northern Transvaal down to Phalaborwa. The students concentrated on the organisation of the schools, whereas the UDF comrades were organising the youth and the community. That was in 1984, around June and July.

The debates and discussions were held in meetings. T-shirts were sold to the people, and political songs and slogans were the order of the day to popularise the UDF. As usual everywhere, some were hesitating and resisting, but they were a very small number.

The Azanian Students Organisation (AZASO) [now called SANSCO, the South African National Students Congress] at Turfloop university, in collaboration with the northern Transvaal region of UDF, organised workshops for students, youth and workers, and ultimately it became evident that Congress politics dominated the whole of Phalaborwa. Namakgale Youth Congress was formed, fol-

lowed by Mashishimale Youth Congress and late in 1985 Lulekani Youth Congress. Mashishimale is a village near Namakgale, and Lulekani is a township in Gazankulu, 17 km from Namakgale.

Early in 1986 the Namakgale Parents Crisis Committee was formed. In all these structures our workers and shopstewards were either in the top leadership or active members. NUM and CCAWUSA were also participating actively in these structures.

Union political policy

In COSATU's CWIU we are proud of the political resolution democratically debated in two congresses and finally adopted with an overwhelming majority. It was built after hectic debates. Shopstewards from all the locals nationally met and debated on this policy, adjourned to get fresh mandates from the various locals, met again and adopted a political policy which accommodated everyone.

The CWIU policy shows that CWIU sees itself as part of the extra-parliamentary opposition. In South Africa you cannot be a trade union that truly represents its members without being involved in political battles for the liberation of the whole people. Trade unions, in alliance with progressive mass-based organisations are entitled to act in the interests of all the oppressed and exploited masses of our country. It is imperative to adopt policies and resolutions that will enable you to form alliances.

We are not observers in the heat of the struggle. Our policies have developed out of our struggles.

Not only that, but we are proud of our union's position and commitment to the broader unity of the working class in this country. At the recent COSATU Special Congress we were one of the unions which pushed for the conference of all the extra-parliamentary organisations genuinely opposed to apartheid.

The unity of the oppressed and exploited masses of our country is crucial, therefore people or organisations invited to any anti-apartheid indaba should be genuinely opposed to apartheid. We cannot invite people or organisations with no mass support or constituency to report back to and get mandates from.

The broader unity of the working class will be the unity of COSATU, NACTU, all the independent unions and working class political organisations, youth and students. On the other hand, the conference of all the extra-parliamentary organisations genuinely opposed to apartheid will include the above organisations, as well as professional groupings such as teachers, lawyers and doctors.

The worker summit is able to build a very strong fighting weapon against the employers and the ruling class. The recent summit brought together different unions from different traditions. It also exposed some leaders who lack respect for consultation on the ground. Future worker summits can focus on the question of one country, one federation. ☆

The struggle for peace in Natal

THAMI MOHLOMI and WILLIS MCHUNU spoke to Labour Monitoring Project (LMP) about the stayaway in Pietermaritzburg, about the peace talks with Inkatha, and about the alliance between workers and youth. Mohlomi is the Southern Natal secretary of COSATU, and Mchunu is NUMSA project organiser in the region.

LMP: *Who was Jabu Ndlovu and what role did she play in the labour movement?*

Mchunu: Jabu worked for Prestige in Pietermaritzburg. She had been a member of the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) since about 1982 and at the time of her death, she was the senior NUMSA shopsteward at the company.

In addition to her activities within the factory she also participated in NUMSA structures nationally, in the COSATU local, as well as in the community structures in Imbali where she lived.

LMP: *Many people have been killed in Pietermaritzburg in the past two years. Is there any special significance that we can attach to the attack on Jabu and her family?*

Mohlomi: We don't think that the attack on Jabu was a random one - it was planned. She was one of those Imbali residents who brought to COSATU's attention the atrocities committed by those "warlords" who lived in the "Stage One" suburb, as well as the collusion between the "warlords" and the police. She participated in the Johannesburg press conference where COSATU released a report detailing the crisis in Imbali. She gave detailed first-hand information on what was taking place there.

LMP: *How many trade unionists have been killed in the conflicts in Pietermaritzburg and surrounding areas over the past few years?*

Mohlomi: I don't know, but it's a lot. The unions that have borne the brunt of the whole conflict are un-

doubtedly COSATU's NUMSA, the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) and the Construction and Allied Workers Union (CAWU). Since 1986 more than ten busdrivers who were TGWU members have been killed. Incidentally Jabu's husband (who was also killed) was a member of FAWU.

LMP: *What were the demands and goals of the stayaway which took place in Pietermaritzburg during 5-7 June 1989?*

Mohlomi: Generally the demand was that all political violence within the whole region should end. The people of Pietermaritzburg hoped that the protest would direct all parties, including Inkatha, to take serious action to stop the violence and the killings. The main focus of this protest was against the state itself. The people would like the state to use its power and influence to stop the violence in Natal, but it would seem that the Nationalist government is refusing to do so for its own ulterior motives. It must be stressed the Minister Vlok's talk of using an "iron fist" to crush organisations isn't a constructive way to resolve the situation.

At another level the protest also aimed to pressurise the police into taking some action against the "warlords", and to get them to allow us to bury our dead without restriction.

Mchunu: The protest also aimed to get the authorities to lift the restric-

tions imposed upon people in terms of State of Emergency regulations. People who are restricted have often become the targets for assassination squads as their movements - reporting daily to the local police station - are widely known.

LMP: *How do you see this kind of protest action bringing about these objectives? Is the idea to put pressure on employers so they will put pressure on the government and Inkatha?*

Mohlomi: Yes, we believe that employers can play a much larger role in the peace process than they have done up till now. They have a real ability to exert pressure on the government. We would like them to pressurise the authorities into establishing an independent commission of inquiry into the activities of the police. The Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce has supported our position, but they have not done enough to ensure that a commission is actually set up.

LMP: *At one stage it appeared as if the protest action was going to affect the whole of Natal, but it was later confined to only to the Pietermaritzburg area. Could you tell us how the action was decided upon?*

Mohlomi: Well, in Pietermaritzburg, immediately after the attack on Comrade Jabu's home, there was a meeting of all concerned people - COSATU members and officials and other community leaders. Most were

very angry and they insisted that some form of decisive action be taken to protest the deaths, but also to protest against the situation that has gone on for far too long.

On the COSATU side the whole issue was referred back to union locals so that they could decide what action they thought was appropriate. The Pietermaritzburg local was in favour of taking immediate action.

The general feeling of the other union locals in Natal - especially in Clairwood and Pinetown - was that they were not in any position to endorse protest action, because they realised that they did not have enough time to mobilise people properly.

After all the reports of the various union locals had been considered, it was decided that the Pietermaritzburg local should proceed with whatever action they were able to take. It was agreed that workers elsewhere in Natal would take whatever action they felt was appropriate.

There is a feeling that further action, which will affect the whole of Natal, may take place.

LMP: *Independent monitoring groups have reported that the stayaway in Pietermaritzburg has not been so successful. Why do you think this was so?*

Mchunu: The main reason for worker support being so low was the lack of time to organise the action. The stayaway arose out of specific incidents and was thus more a spontaneous reaction than a carefully

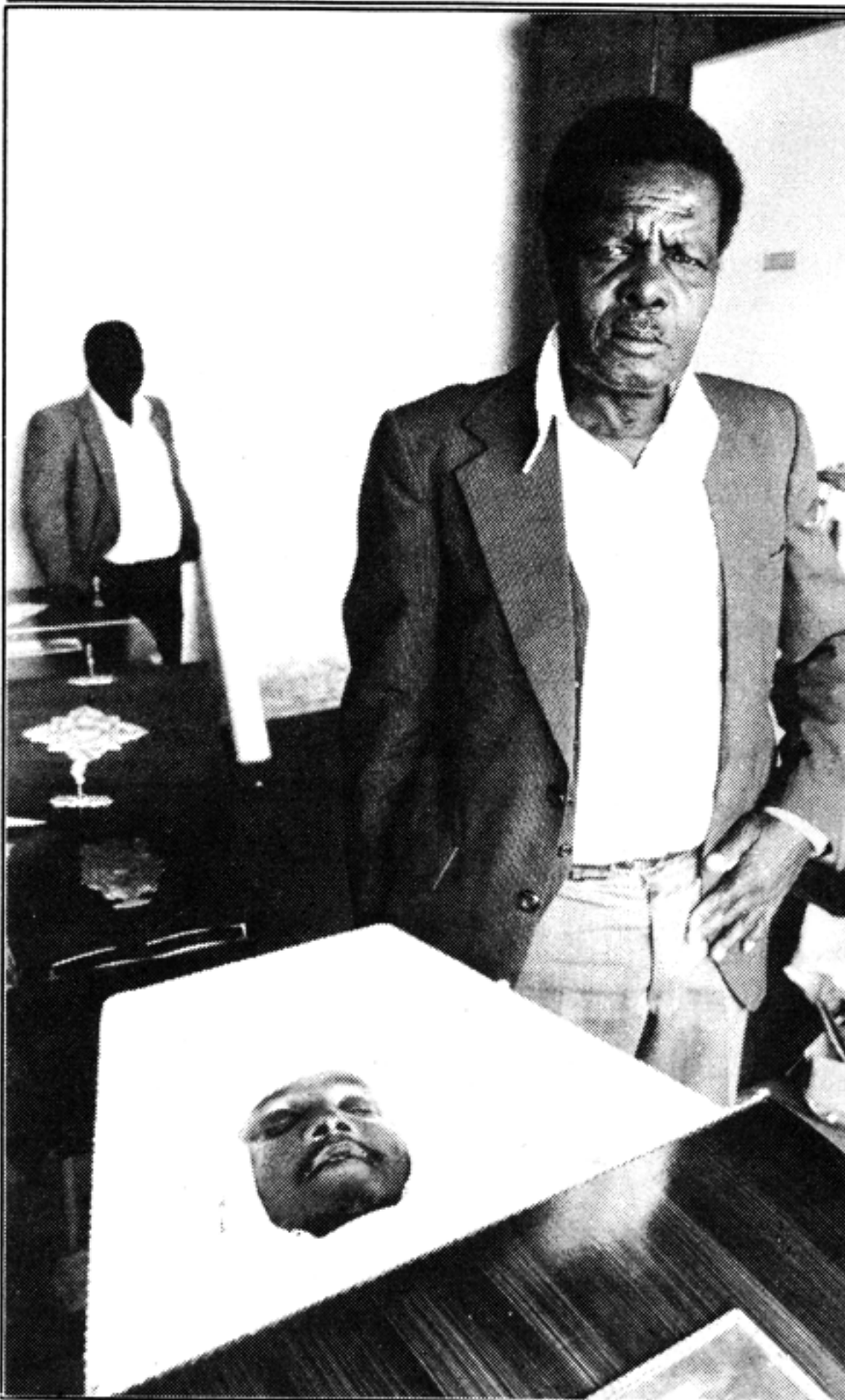
planned exercise. We have to admit that the extensive discussions that should have occurred in structures did not take place. Not enough work was done on the ground among workers and the different sectors of the community. The role of the police should also not be underestimated. The difficulties facing the people were great.

LMP: *In previous stayaway actions in Natal, busdrivers have been held to be responsible for workers being unable to attend work. They have become the focus of persistent attacks from organisations and groups wishing to wreck stayaways. Could you tell us something about the position of busdrivers in the latest action?*

Mohlomi: The bus and taxi services ran during the period 5-7 June. The TGWU made it clear that bus services should operate in the city and the COSATU local agreed to this. In the past some people have blamed the absence of busses for the success of stayaways. As I said earlier, more than ten drivers have been killed in this city.

LMP: *How would you describe the latest peace initiative? What were the goals and processes as envisaged by COSATU?*

Mchunu: We in COSATU are committed to peace in the region. It is in everybody's interests that the violence comes to an end. The best way of achieving that peace is a joint commitment between Inkatha and all other organisations to end the violence. The



A father stands beside the body of his slain busdriver son, Patrick Magwasa, who was killed in 1988 - busdrivers, mostly TGWU members, have often been targets possibly because they are seen as assisting in stayaways by refusing to drive buses

Photo: Cedric Nunn/Afrapix

joint commitment should be endorsed at a meeting of all organisations in some sort of conference.

We have decided that neutral par-

ties should convene a conference on our behalf. This would avoid a debate as to who must initiate a peace conference.

Inkatha said that meetings should take place at their Ulundi headquarters. We insisted that all meetings should take place at a neutral venue. Inkatha would never accept any meeting in COSATU House in Johannesburg. After the intervention of the churches it seems as if the problem of venue may have been resolved for the present.

LMP: *It seems that the state and Inkatha have moved closer together. Perhaps they have reached an understanding on how they will deal with COSATU and the UDF in Natal. How do you view the situation?*

Mchunu: We don't precisely know what the relationship is between the state and the Kwazulu authorities on the

issue of the Natal conflict. Perhaps they have reached agreements on how to deal with democratic forces within the region. But the situation at the mo-

ment is very sensitive. It would be wrong to speculate too much.

LMP: *Could you tell us more about how you envisage any peace working? We have already had one peace concluded between Inkatha and COSATU in Natal which does not seem to have worked at all. Specifically, people were reluctant to make complaints or to defend complaints against them. Also every time a complaint was made against an individual, the organisation to whom the accused person was alleged to belong, claimed that the individual was not operating on their behalf. How do you envisage any further peace effort overcoming difficulties like these?*

Mohlomi: We have had some ideas on how we are going to enforce agreements that we reach at a peace conference. One idea is to establish some form of tribunal which will need to be staffed by a number of influential people from within Natal, nationally and perhaps even by representatives of foreign governments. The tribunal will be able to immediately send people to investigate any violation, whether it be attacks or threats, that are reported to it. With all these neutral people and groupings participating it will be difficult for any organisation to renege on any agreement that may be reached.

Buthelezi himself suggested the establishment of Monitoring Committees in all the areas where Inkatha and COSATU/UDF function. These Com-

mittees would then monitor any violations of the agreement. We believe that these committees could be useful.

LMP: *To what extent has there been an attempt to brief major employer groupings and to get them, on the one hand, to pressurise the state to police the conflicts fairly, and on the other hand, to put pressure Inkatha to come to a peace conference?*

Mohlomi: The Natal Chambers of Commerce and of Industries have been briefed about the situation. Nationally COSATU intends to meet with the FCI. SEIFSA has agreed to make representations to the government as well as to Buthelezi on the issue.

LMP: *Compared to the previous peace initiative there appears to be greater understanding and co-operation between UDF affiliates, particularly the youth, and COSATU in Pietermaritzburg. Could you tell us how this co-operation has been achieved?*

Mchunu: Firstly, I think we should look at what occurred immediately after the first peace initiative - people were detained and the UDF was restricted in terms of the Emergency regulations. That had a psychological effect on the youth who began to see the exercise of negotiation as futile. What peace can you make when you are being detained and restricted? The situation was very bad.

Secondly, although there has been

a sincere agreement to enter into a peace initiative, our people's commitment to it has varied. Such commitments do not reach all levels of organisation at one go, so you are likely to get different responses, particularly when the thing is new. But as time goes on, and debates keep going on, people start understanding each other and they start accommodating each other. This kind of debate has now been going on since the first initiative and it is still going on. It is this kind of open debate which has helped the move to peace more and more.

While the youth in Pietermaritzburg have realised that the actions of the government, e.g. detentions, banning, etc., will never stop, they have also realised that it does not mean that one will be unable to proceed with one's own strategies. That is the situation now - and I would say that it exists in the whole of Natal. There is a lot of working together between the youth and unions.

LMP: *So basically because of state repression youth organisations have had to adapt, and they have adapted in a particular way which is fruitful for co-operation and consultation with unions?*

Mohlomi: Correct. They sometimes attend our local meetings where they are able to get report backs which they would not otherwise get. UDF structures have got their problems because of the repression and the banning of their leaders.

When we first started engaging in

these talks there was co-operation between COSATU and UDF structures - particularly in Pietermaritzburg. But then the state responded by detaining and restricting people, e.g. officials like Martin Wittenberg and Skumbuza Ngwenya. As a result of these detentions and because of harassment the youth lost a lot of their leaders, other had to flee.

That was when some tensions began to arise between COSATU and UDF structures. Some leaders of UDF had been informed about the peace processes but they were unable to convey that down to the rank-and-file membership because of the restrictions. So when the youth saw on TV and in the newspaper that COSATU and Buthelezi had signed an agreement, they naturally felt that they had not been properly consulted. But since then, I think, we have worked excellently through all the structures - we have tried to discuss things as much as possible.

LMP: *For some years people have argued that it is important to build a united front at grassroots level between COSATU and UDF affiliates. This would bring together the two most powerful forces in our country, the workers and the youth. This appears to be happening in Pietermaritzburg. How significant do you think this development is, and do you think there are lesson for the rest of the country?*

Mohlomi: As I have been saying this process is fairly advanced in

Pietermaritzburg now. Whatever meetings take place you find there is representation from community structures, especially youth. The same is developing around Durban. Whenever we have major issues, or even ordinary local shopsteward council meetings, you find a lot of youth attending. They are ready to put forward their views, and we come out with a common understanding on issues. Because we communicate and take decisions jointly there is no one who goes against a decision once it has been taken. That is quite useful because we have been able to prevent a lot of conflict which arose in the past between youth and workers.

I think there are a lot of lessons to be learnt from this. If you compare the situation now from what it was two or three years back, you find there are a lot differences in the way we and our youth operated. In fact, the youth are beginning to accept leadership from the older people, which was not the case two years back. Even in the townships they are trying to organise the older people - the parents - saying, "Look we can't do without you, you must come and be part of us." That's very significant because that was not the thinking of youth in the past. They are the one's who are now interested in setting up civic organisations for the parents.

This is quite a significant advance. In the past the vigilante problem has arisen partly because older people have complained: "Why are the youth stoning the busses?" or "Who has made this call for a stayaway?" - that

kind of thing. So these tensions have sometimes made some of our members think that the youth must be disciplined. But now because of the close co-operation that union members have with the youth they are able to give direction and guidance to the youth.

LMP: *But UDF affiliates comprise more than just youth organisations? To what extent has the Natal Indian Congress, for example, been involved in the peace process?*

Mohlomi: In Pietermaritzburg there have been attempts to set up a committee which will involve all the organisations in all the areas. I think it has been fairly successful. They do hold meetings from time to time where they brief all sectors - women, civics, NIC, coloured areas, and so on.

We (in Durban) also have that kind of structure. How successful it is I can't really gauge at the moment. Of course, it's true there have been problems in that people of other race groups have not really been participating fully in this peace process. We are trying to involve them as much as possible.

We have commissioned some of the comrades on the working committee to go and brief those organisations about developments and to find out from them what they can do. But it is true that we still have problems at this level - they haven't been fully integrated into the whole process. It is something we are trying to work towards. ☆

SMASHING THE IRON RICE POT

Workers and unions in China's market socialism

All bosses are the same - they're only there for making money. God damn it, I've worked for thirty years and still have to serve dishes to capitalists! I still don't understand why we have to enter into joint ventures with bosses and that the masters of our country, the workers, have to work for capitalists. Are we really that poor that we can't even afford this little bit of dignity? But then again, it's true that the standard of living of my colleagues and I has got much better. Now everybody has TV, fridge, hi-fi and washing machines. It is all a result of joint ventures....If we were to wait for state investment only, when will we ever have these luxuries? It's all a very difficult question, isn't it?

(Restaurant worker, People's Republic of China, 1987)

Smashing the Iron Rice Pot, the third of the new series of Asia Labour Monitor publications, looks at the trade union movement inside mainland China, and the stresses and strains imposed on it by China's ambitious programme of political and economic reform.

Smashing the Iron Rice Pot explores the extent to which workers are 'masters of the country' following these reforms. Reform and 'State Capitalism' have brought with them new problems: spiralling wage disparities; the possibilities of bankruptcies and layoffs; the loss of extensive welfare benefits and job security; and new management techniques from overseas, involving considerable reductions in trade union power.

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See articles on China in this edition
Pages 107 - 129

SARHWU - problems and advances since the 1987 strike

RENEE ROUX traces the progress of SARHWU over the past 18 months, focusing on the remarkable victories won in railway strikes in Natal during 1988.

There has been much speculation and rumour over the last eight months about problems in SARHWU. There has not, however, been any analysis of the enormous organisational obstacles faced by the union. Nor has there been any analysis of its progress since the 1987 strike.

In February, the leadership of railway workers, as delegated to SARHWU's national congress, firmly asserted the need for maximum unity in their ranks if their goals are to

be reached. This was one of the greatest victories for SARHWU members and their organisation in the past two years. They have learned through experience that when there are different views in an organisation, which is often the case, these should never be

allowed to impede progress.

The 1987 strike

On the 23rd March 1987 Johannesburg railway workers downed tools, demanding

**South African
Railway and Harbour
Workers Union**



An injury to one is an injury to all

the reinstatement of a dismissed colleague. A week later more than 20,000 workers were out on strike. Thus began the 2 1/2 month battle between SARHWU and S.A. Transport Services (SATS), the giant state-controlled corporation that runs the harbours and airways, the railways and pipelines, and much of the country's road transport.

Reporting on the aftermath of the strike, the author of a *Labour Bulletin* article ended off rather gloomily:

"What appeared to be a victory for workers, turned out to be a state ploy to intensify harassment while at the same time maintaining the operation of SATS. The state intends to establish a stable working environment through destruction of the union's worker leadership. The reluctance to recognise SARHWU is a stubborn attempt to force workers to accept the Black Trade Union (BLATU)"¹.

This article accurately described what was happening at the time, and what was to come. The union was to experience harassment, collusion between SATS management and the Security Police, and leadership problems. What the article could not predict was the enormous resilience of SATS workers and their willingness to endure extreme hardship in order finally to "tame" their bosses.

Determined to prevent a strong public sector union emerging, the state launched a campaign against SARHWU. No doubt it was also concerned that privatisation should proceed smoothly in the transport sector. The events during the strike are

well-known: workers were detained, evicted from hostels, shot dead in Germiston and Johannesburg, and besieged in COSATU offices by armed police. These actions and SATS' absolute refusal to negotiate, led to a spiral of violence and counter-violence.

Never before has a union been subjected to such systematic propaganda attacks aimed at smearing its entire leadership, which the state stopped just short of putting on trial. The lengthy detention of the leadership and the 150 court cases involving over 1,000 SARHWU activists were designed to disorganise if not to crush the union. The attack on SARHWU was extended into an attack on COSATU itself, culminating in the siege and then bombing of COSATU House.

The detention of experienced worker leadership was a severe blow. The lack of formal recognition, which enables union officials or other union members to service workers, was a particular problem. It was extremely hard to consolidate union structures. The union has throughout been forced to collect subscriptions by hand. This stretches resources and limits the income of the union.

But what the state strategists did not realise, swallowed up as they were in their own propaganda of "provocation, instigation and intimidation", was that the mass militancy displayed from the onset of the strike was born out of decades of the most oppressive conditions. The spirit of liberation instilled by the strike and its



SARHWU members on a station platform during the 1987 strike

Photo: Santu Mofokeng/Afrapix

overwhelming victory was not going to be crushed away. At the end of the strike it was possibly only the workers who were not surprised by their victory, and this confidence has stayed with them.

The strike won the right for workers to resign from BLATU. It won de facto recognition that SARHWU members have the right to be represented by democratically elected shopstewards. According to SARHWU: "Ultimately, the most far-reaching political gain from the 1987 strike was that it forced SATS management to recognise democratically elected worker representatives." It is the first time that black workers in the state transport sector have won this right.

Despite the strains of such a big

and lengthy strike workers remained loyal to unity and built on the advances made during the strike. They had proven to themselves that they could wield enormous power.

National tasks after the Johannesburg strike

It is no wonder that the leadership of SARHWU refers to the past two years as a period of adapting and orientation to enormous changes and challenges. Not only was the union faced with the strike and state repression, it also had to cope with new organisational tasks.

The strike forced SATS in the southern Transvaal to recognise that it had to deal with SARHWU, and therefore also to take workers more

seriously. But this was not the end of SARWHU's problems. The union had to become a national force to address the needs of railway workers. By fighting to extend the gains of the strike to other regions the union could gain a foothold. But recognition of committees would not be a substitute for the recognition of the union, for an agreement which would provide workers and officials with negotiated procedures, and for stop-order facilities.

In October 1986 SATS employed 207,221 workers nationally.² Of these 95,305 were African workers.

After the strike SARHWU had a membership of approximately 25,000, mainly in southern Transvaal. SATS had no intention of recognising SARHWU at the time, and therefore did not clarify its position on recognition.

As time went on however, it became clear that at the very least SATS would require SARHWU to represent a majority of workers nationally in a particular racial category, as well as and register under the Labour Relations Act, before it would recognise the union. Even then it would only recognise SARHWU in respect of African workers.

As SARWHU's membership grew in other regions, the rights won through the strike in Transvaal were not automatically extended to SARHWU members elsewhere. SARHWU was going to have to fight for these rights step by step in each region.

After the strike SATS still thought that, with the help of propaganda,

SARHWU could be contained and crushed in Transvaal. The state corporation believed that SARHWU would never become the majority union in SATS, and particularly not in Natal. This hope was also based on that widely held ideology that workers in Natal are essentially more conservative than anywhere else. SATS did everything to prop up the more "respectable" of BLATU leadership in Natal in order to ward off SARHWU. For SATS Natal was a critical area because of its strategic position: Natal has a high concentration of railway and harbour workers, and Durban is the country's main export harbour.

Explosion of SARHWU membership

The problems of not being formally recognised were made even worse when membership soared after the 1987 strike. More and more demands were placed on the available leadership, and on the structures and resources of the union.

The membership in southern Transvaal alone trebled within 3 months in 1987, from 8,000 to 22,000. In Natal SARHWU membership grew from 2,000 to 15,000 in about nine months; the national membership shot up from about 9,000 at the time of the strike to at least 43,000 at the end of 1988, with many more workers pushing to be signed up.

It was not only the rate of growth that brought enormous difficulties, but also the nature of the growth. Up till today, the growth in most regions has

WORKERS AND DISPUTES

been the result of a sudden explosion of anger and frustration, when workers realise that SARHWU can provide a powerful alternative to the "Bosses' sweetheart, BLATU". This was the case in Natal and East London and to some extent in Kimberley. One shop steward comments:

" Sometimes we did not know our head from our elbow, and seemed to be bumping both everywhere. Each skirmish with the bosses brought members pouring in; still our officials did not have access, and we could not represent our members."

Since the 1987 strike it is only in the smaller outlying areas of the Northern Cape, Western Cape, Northern Transvaal and Northern Natal, that the union has actually had to go out and recruit members. In these areas it was able to avoid growing too fast for the available resources and existing structures.

In addition, unlike most of the other industrial unions, SARHWU only established a real foothold in its sector after the formation of COSATU. This was a mixed blessing. While it gave organisation a boost it also put more pressure on the union. The consciousness and expectations of workers are very different today, compared to when the progressive trade union movement emerged. "The truth is that since its formation, many workers say that they are "joining COSATU" rather than an affiliate. They are usually under the illusion that their union is this enormous powerful organisation with endless resources," says a SARHWU organiser.

A national union overnight

The explosion of membership has also turned the union overnight into a national organisation with branches across the country. The union has had to develop national structures and identify national priorities. To accomplish this, the union has to accommodate the different backgrounds, strengths and weaknesses of each region and distribute resources appropriately.

Building and consolidating organisation after rapid growth is one of the most difficult tasks facing the trade union movement and in fact all mass organisation. Such a period creates enormous strain. It is especially difficult when this growth involves becoming a national organisation for the first time. Many unions have suffered in the process of trying to adapt to similar conditions; for example MAWU in 1983, FAWU after the 1986 merger, and CCAWUSA in 1987. SARHWU has been facing exactly the same challenges over the past two years.

Natal workers - inspired by Transvaal strike

Inspired by the victories of their Transvaal comrades, SARHWU members in Durban, who numbered about 1,000 at the time of the 1987 strike, set about recruiting with more confidence in the last half of 1987. By January 1988 they had signed up about 3,000 members. But SATS management refused to process their

resignations from BLATU, or to recognise representatives elected by SARHWU members. Workers were afraid to be left without any representation.

But there was no doubt that workers were tired of BLATU. Unrecognised as they were, SARHWU shop stewards were better able to feel the mood of the workers and act in their defence. An example was the stoppage at Point, a section of Durban harbour. Point has historically been a centre of organisation of railway workers in the harbour as well as of stevedores, who are members of Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU).

On one particular payday in February 1988, SATS deducted, without any consultation, an amount of money from every workers' pay packet. They claimed that workers had been paid too much bonus since 1986. BLATU kept quiet. Even though this only amounted to approximately R30 out of the wages of the black workers, and R90 out of white artisans' wages, SARHWU members initiated discussions amongst the workers. Very soon the whole harbour came to a standstill, apart from the little that the artisans could continue doing alone. Within three hours the pay truck returned and everyone, including the artisans, was refunded.

This victory gave massive impetus for people to join SARHWU and even the white workers warmed towards the union. Dumisane Mathonsi, treasurer of SARHWU Durban branch comments:

"Many of the white workers respect us now. I have been told that over and over by Mr. Marx, a member of SALSTAFF. But they are scared and loyal to their nationalist ideology. We are making breakthroughs, that is why I believe they transferred a particular driver to NuPier, to get him away from me."

However, the problems were the same as those experienced by Johannesburg workers a year earlier: the management and BLATU would not process resignations, and would not recognise SARHWU shop stewards or the union officials.

In an NEC of the union in April 1988, workers had resolved to launch a resignation campaign, and this gave rise to a concerted effort by the Durban branch. A court application was made on behalf of one worker, Temba Pakkies, who had been trying in vain to resign for some time. Although the hope was that his case would set a precedent, only Pakkies's resignation was processed and his monies refunded. The union did not have the resources to lodge a legal application on behalf of each member.

Workers were extremely angry when they heard this. They downed tools on 24 June 1988, demanding to see the BLATU Regional Chairperson, Mr. M.J. Mithiyane. He soon came and was told by at least 5,000 workers that they "want SARHWU" and want to resign from BLATU because it "*favourishe abaqashi*", while he himself had promised them "heaven and earth".

When management approached

WORKERS AND DISPUTES

BLATU : IMPROVEMENTS

PROGRESSED A LONG WAY DURING HARD BARGAINING WITH MINISTER AND MANAGEMENT ON A NUMBER OF VERY IMPORTANT ISSUE. ANNOUNCEMENTS WILL BE MADE BY BLATU IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE.



SARHWU: DESTRUCTION



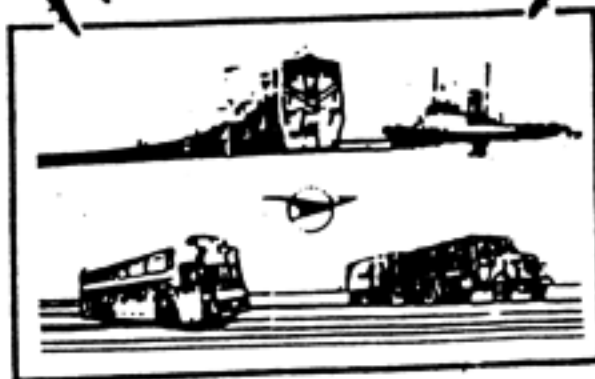
STRIKES STRIKES.....
 DISMISSALS UNEMPLOYMENT...
 LOSS OF HOUSES POVERTY
 MISERY HUNGER.....

- a) EMPLOYMENT
- b) SECURITY
- c) ADVANCEMENT
- d) SALARY ADJUSTMENTS
- e) HOUSING LOANS
- f) ASSISTANCE
- g) REINSTATEMENT



BLATU:

THE SKY IS THE LIMIT



SARHWU : NO FUTURE

PREVENT SELF-DESTRUCTION - GO BACK TO WORK.

BLATU propoganda made many claims regarding what the structure could do for workers, but they have never done anything substantial to back up their claims

Pamphlet: Courtesy of SARHWU

he workers to return to work, they said that they had no problem, as long as resignation forms were prepared for them to sign. Both Mithiyane and management solemnly promised that the workers would be allowed to resign. By this time however workers were well-seasoned and insisted on seeing the forms before returning to work. Within three hours, forms were prepared, resignations commenced, and SARHWU returned to work.

In that month, at least 4,000 workers resigned from BLATU and SARHWU's membership shot up to 6,000. In fact the union says that it has not been able to keep up with resignations, so that while 15,000 workers in Natal have resigned from BLATU, they have only been able to sign up 13,000.

A long struggle followed with BLATU trying to win members back. One of the tools they attempted using was blatant propaganda BLATU alleged:

- that SARHWU is not prepared to negotiate, only to strike;
- that SARHWU is not recognised, and therefore cannot negotiate;
- that BLATU will remain the majority in the region and nationally, and SARHWU will not be recognised because SATS only recognises one union per "racial" sector;
- that SARHWU is "pro-ANC" (BLATU leadership was present at the launch of UWUSA in 1986, and had expressed interest in affiliating);
- that SARHWU was "pro-disinvestment", and would cause

workers to lose their jobs.

This propaganda did appeal to some of the hard-line Inkatha supporters. However, SARHWU had already adopted an attitude in Natal and elsewhere of not engaging in conflict with BLATU, but rather trying to speak to their members and focus on the needs of all SATS workers. This approach obviously paid off, as not even these strong Inkatha supporters resigned from SARHWU. The need to keep them in the union did however pose constant challenges, which only served to make the leadership and majority members more determined to win recognition and fight for the rights of all employed by SATS. On the other hand the progress of SARHWU was weakening the unity of the leadership of BLATU. "There were the pro-COSATU and pro-UWUSA groups within the BLATU Regional Management Committee. Mr Mo-shoeshoe was one of those who were pro-COSATU and he is now a member of SARHWU," says a SARHWU office-bearer.

Living wage campaign

SARHWU members in Durban were very excited when the April 1988 National Executive Committee decided to launch a campaign to fight the wage freeze. After extensive consultation, the August NEC pinned the living wage demand at R1,500 per month. The union is barred from negotiating in the SATS Labour Council and thereby participating in the system of wage arbitration at SATS. But

WORKERS AND DISPUTES

it was confident that by drawing the support of more and more workers for a demand of R1,500, it could push SATS to pay more than what was awarded by the arbitrator.

Shop stewards and officials carried the message of the Living Wage Campaign throughout Natal. In the process of building the campaign, membership grew throughout the region, and structures were established. In Durban, four branches were formed, including Umzinto in the south and Stanger in the north. Other branches were established in Kokstad, Ladysmith, Empangeni/Richards Bay and most recently Pietermaritzburg. Membership grew in the process, even though areas such as Richards Bay and Pietermaritzburg were still very weak. Each branch sends two delegates to the Regional Executive Committee (REC), which meets regularly.

Unfair dismissals spark off regional strike

One of the main issues on the agenda at meetings of all structures was unfair dismissals, and the lack of negotiated grievance and disciplinary procedures. In addition an NEC in September had given impetus for the union to step up its campaigns for recognition and a living wage in SATS. It was two unfair dismissals that

sparked a stoppage in Durban on 19th September, which by the 21st had spread to Stanger, Ladysmith, Kokstad, Empangeni/Richards Bay and Umzinto. In addition, East London workers had just initiated strike action over the dismissal of workers as well as on the living wage demands of the union.

These actions pre-empted national action on the living wage and recognition demands, and did place new strains on the union. As it turned out, however, they prepared the Natal region to play an important role, together with other regions, in welding the union together when it was threatened with division.

The history of these two dismissals were as follows: in the first case, a worker named Lupindo was assaulted some months before by a white supervisor named Cloete. He laid a charge, and presented medical certificates to the inspector at Point, with the hope that disciplinary action would be taken. Nothing happened, until a second quarrel erupted between the two. This time Lupindo was quicker on his feet and threw the first punch. He was immediately suspended without pay and dismissed when the magistrate's court found him guilty of assault. Workers were angry about what was clearly preferential treatment, when in fact the two were now "quits". The second unfair dismissal took place at



Durban station. Colin Sibiya was dismissed when a cloakroom attendant under his supervision lost funds.

Accumulated anger about these two cases, led to workers downing tools on 19 September. Their demand was unconditional reinstatement of both Lupindo and Sibiya.

Most of the offensive by SATS and the state was focused on Durban, where at least 16,000 of the roughly 20,000 black workers in the region are concentrated. On the second day SATS and the police tried to break the strike. Four hundred workers were arrested as they moved from their clock-in points to various meeting places. Seeing that workers were not intimidated, SATS asked to meet with representatives, ie. SARHWU shop stewards. They were told that no meeting would take place until workers were released, and before the end of the day this demand was met.

On the third day workers were tear-gassed. The explanation from SATS was that workers were sabotaging the cranes, which were being operated by white artisans. Again workers were not afraid and demanded that this harassment should cease if any settlement was to be reached. On the same day SATS agreed to reinstate the two workers, and agreed to give a written guarantee that this would be immediate and unconditional.

Workers turn to larger issues

When Lupindo and Sibiya returned, however it was not to work, but to join the strike. To workers the

unfair dismissals were clearly only symptoms of the larger issues - that the union and shop stewards were not recognised and that they were forced to be represented by BLATU which was worse than useless. As a result workers resolved to continue their strike, demanding that SARHWU and shop stewards be recognised, and that BLATU must no longer be involved in any representations or negotiations on behalf of SARHWU members.

Workers also wanted SARHWU to put forward their wage demands. BLATU was clearly doing nothing concrete on the issue of wages and the government's freeze apart from submitting it to arbitration under the system designed by the government to suppress wages. This meant simply awaiting the arbitrator's decision at the end of September. The majority of workers were at that point earning a measly R337.50 per month. On the other hand workers had over the months begun to fully understand and support the demand for R1,500. Soon this became the main demand of the strike.

Workers were also inspired to continue their strike by the fact that in East London SARHWU members had not yet won their demand for the reinstatement of the dismissed worker.

Management was surprised that workers were still out on 21 September, despite the written undertakings to reinstate the two workers, and even more surprised that they could not push cargo out through Richards Bay. Richards Bay had joined the strike after a few days. SARHWU assistant

WORKERS AND DISPUTES

general secretary, David Moeti³, who was regional secretary in Natal at the time, recalls:

"In fact, we were very weak in the Empangeni/Richards Bay area, with only a few strong members. But when the workers found that the bosses were forcing them to work overtime because their fellow-workers in Durban had closed the harbour, they joined the strike."

Management met a committee elected by the SARHWU REC, and although wage arbitration was not complete said that it would probably be 12%, which is in fact exactly what it turned out to be. Shop stewards reported this news to workers, who in turn re-iterated their demand for R1,500 per month.

At this point management issued an ultimatum to return to work by 4.30 p.m. on 22 September. Workers were evicted from their hostels. Wherever they gathered, they were accompanied by large contingents of armed police on the ground and in hovering helicopters. SATS also obtained a Supreme Court interdict confirming that the strike was illegal and that the workers could be legally dismissed.

First negotiations: SARHWU wins wage increase

Seeing that the workers were unflinching, SATS management for the very first time agreed to meet with a SARHWU delegation, including shop stewards and two head office officials. The agreement reached between 25

and 26 September showed how vulnerable SATS can be and how quickly they could exercise their "managerial discretion". Even before the arbitrator ruled for a 12% increase, management offered 19.5%, and agreed to implement this nationally. SATS management also agreed to afford Natal shop stewards the same recognition enjoyed in southern Transvaal, and for the first time conceded that it would recognise SARHWU, as long as the union registered. Further they agreed that no worker would be disciplined or victimised for participating in the strike and that there would be another national meeting.

An agreement was signed on 27 September and workers returned to work on the 28th. The strike had lasted for 9 days. Although they were by no means satisfied with what had been agreed, they were confident that the union was poised to take up the demand for full recognition and R1,500 per month at a national level. During the strike, SARHWU had become the majority union in the region and this added to their confidence that their struggle for recognition was nearly over.

When workers learned that over 1,800 of their East London comrades had been dismissed on the 7th day of a strike which concerned the same grievances, and contrary to the undertaking that strikers would not be victimised, they were even more determined that the union should act speedily to defend them.

The reasons for SATS's intransigence in East London while settling

in Durban will not be dealt with here, but they obviously exploited the fact that the SARHWU membership was smaller (about 2,000) at the time of the strike. Management's hand was also strengthened by the division that still existed between SARHWU and the National Union of Railway Workers (NURW) in East London and Port Elizabeth, as well as the massive unemployment in the region. Ships destined for East London were easily diverted to Port Elizabeth.

The dismissals that followed the strike in East London also turned out to be a disguised form of rationalisation and retrenchment. In the months that followed, almost 1,500 were re-employed on a selective basis; the criteria that were used were almost ex-

clusively age and health as determined by the SATS doctors. With no recourse to the Labour Relations Act and the industrial courts, the workers were unable to challenge these unfair dismissals.

Problems in national co-ordination

Natal delegates to the SARHWU national congress on 9 - 10 October 1988, expected to find equal enthusiasm. They wanted to bring to a head the campaigns of the year and plan for national united action for a living wage and for recognition of SARHWU. They were also determined to secure the reinstatement of the East London workers. They were surprised



SARHWU (S Tvl) regional meeting - discussing the problems and challenges facing the union

Photo: Labour Bulletin

to find that there were problems and division in their union and that there was no unity when it came to electing their national leadership.

According to SARHWU leaders it was clear at the time that the union needed to unite and consolidate their membership. A common national programme was needed to address the immediate needs of SATS workers, as well as a longer term strategy to build a powerful union.

For eighteen months most of the energies and resources of the union had been tied up with the legal defence of its members. With the cases tapering off, the union again had to face its main organisational tasks, and these were becoming more and more complex as the union grew in size. At the time of the congress this realisation had not filtered through all the structures. The differences that emerged in the congress were not ideological but the absence of a common understanding on the way forward. As a result, delegates left the congress without much discussion on the concrete details of the national campaign, other than a date for possible action at the end of October.

National talks break down

The weeks that followed saw increasing tensions in the union. In the words of Mathonsi, the Durban treasurer:

"It was clear to many that the union was not in a position to co-ordinate protracted national action in all the centres."

Natal goes it alone

In spite of this the Natal region decided to go ahead with their action, and on 28 October workers downed tools throughout Natal. The reasons for continuing action in Natal are complex, but in short:

- The union had built up a momentum and mass support during the past 10 months. It had only recently gained mass support through the struggles described above. Had it not taken the action workers expected, the union risked losing this support.
- Most of the membership in Natal were new and inexperienced; they would have been demoralised if they were dragged into problems which originated in other regions.
- Workers' expectations and demands were becoming more complex, and these had to be tabled to management.
- From an early stage, SATS management were aware that the worker leadership were under pressure and therefore vulnerable to manipulation.

On 26 October Mathonsi was called into the regional SATS office by the Port Manager. He was asked whether it was true that a second strike was being planned. When Mathonsi denied knowledge of such a plan, he was offered "food, whisky and nice accommodation", if "we can work together". When this bribery was reported to the workers, it added fuel to the fire.

The striking workers were immediately confronted with strong-arm tactics: they were reminded of the interdict and told that their meeting on SATS property was illegal in terms of the State of Emergency. They were told to work or disperse, and chose to disperse. From Monday 31 October until the end of the strike workers met in different halls around Durban. Throughout the strike there was a massive police presence, and at one stage helicopters were literally chasing workers around the streets of Durban.

On 31 October 3 shop-stewards were delegated by the region to meet management. The management delegation included Van Vuuren, the National Director of Labour Relations for SATS. From the start, the union clarified that its demands combined local, regional and national demands, and these were tabled:

1. A national minimum wage of R1,500 per month.
2. The recognition of SARHWU.
3. Extensive revision of the present disciplinary procedure.
4. Provision of equal medical aid benefits to all SATS workers.
5. Immediate implementation of pay parity at all levels.
6. Equal pension benefits to all SATS workers.
7. Recognition of the people's holidays as paid public holidays, i.e., 1 May, 16 June, 16 December and 22 April (the anniversary of the 1987 dismissals and shootings of SARHWU members, which failed to break the strike).

8. Six months maternity leave for women workers.
9. Two weeks paternity leave for men where applicable.
10. Information on the hourly rates of pay.
11. Pay workers for 6-8 June stayaway and cease threatening disciplinary action.
12. Clarify the relationship between SATS, BLATU and Old Mutual.
13. Transkei/Bophutatswana/Venda/Ciskei citizens must be appointed to permanent staff.
14. Hours of duty of all SATS workers must be the same.
15. Reinstate the dismissed East London workers.

Management was clearly bargaining on the knowledge that Natal might remain alone in this strike, and kept referring to discussions with the NEC of SARHWU and "future developments between SATS and SARHWU nationally" to undermine the representatives. Most of the demands raised remained unanswered or were claimed to be "national issues". Management refused to discuss the dismissals, "because the East London issue is a matter which can only be discussed in East London"⁴.

When it became clear to the leadership that other regions were not likely to join the strike, they reluctantly had to convince members to return to work until the problems of co-ordination could be sorted out. According to shop stewards and officials "Workers were quite bitter and unhappy, but we managed to cool them off. Eventually

we went back united."

Workers unite SARHWU

SARHWU called a special national congress on 25 February 1989, in order to resolve the crisis that was paralysing the union. It is not surprising that all regions urged the need to stand solidly behind the leadership that carried majority support, in an effort to build maximum unity. Natal had supported a minority position in the September conference. Now their delegation asserted: "Whatever one's individual preferences are, there is no way to build an organisation into a fighting tool other than through recognition of the will of the majority at a particular moment in time." Through holding this position, Natal region became a force for unity.

During the second half of 1988 SARHWU had been unable to take effective national action. Although the NEC decided on campaigns such as the resignation campaign, the Living Wage Campaign and the recognition campaign, tensions in the union prevented the campaigns from developing. At the same time, the absence of effective campaigns and direction worsened the tensions.

It was only in the Natal region that leadership managed to mobilise around campaigns that were supposed to be national. This strengthened the region. But it also showed Natal workers that they could not progress alone. They needed the backing of a national union and a national struggle if they were going to make any pro-

gress against SATS. It was this experience of the power of their campaigning, and of the weakness caused by division, that made the Natal region a force for unity at the congress.

The fact that all SARHWU members faced a common employer probably made unity easier to attain than in a union facing several hundred different companies. Still the struggle to unify SARHWU has lessons for other unions. Ongoing campaigns and momentum are needed. These give direction to the union, and develop and nurture layers of leadership with a national perspective, and leadership which is close to the ground. Without a programme of campaigns and action, there is a danger that the organisation will turn in on itself and experience destructive conflict.

On the other hand national leadership needs to be as flexible and accomodating as it is decisive and united. Organisation and struggle cannot always progress according to a blue-print, and there are many aspects which leadership cannot easily forecast or control.

The way forward

The tasks that face SARHWU are more enormous than two years ago, but the union is confident that it is ready to meet the challenges. The struggle to consolidate organisation in the regions and nationally will continue, as will the fight for union recognition and a living wage.

While SARHWU does not agree



that registration of the union should be a pre-requisite for recognition, the National Congress of October 1988 took a decision to register. The union knows that BLATU and the registrar are bound to make this difficult, and is preparing itself on various levels.

The union vice-president, Johnny Potgieter, says: "SATS wants one union per "racial" group, and we will have another battle to admit all workers and be registered as a non-racial union for the transport services. But SARHWU is set to win mass support from the members of the coloured, Indian and white staff associations, and will also take on this challenge."

The Workers' Summit and the public sector

The main task of all the unions in the public sector are to secure the fundamental rights of workers in the sector: security of employment, permanent status and access to all benefits. In order to achieve this they need to win recognition, the right to representation, stop orders and collec-

tive bargaining rights.

Like other public sector unions, SARHWU is enthusiastic about the campaign against the present Labour Relations Act that came out of the workers summit, particularly the demand for state, agricultural and domestic workers to be included in the Act. The campaign will hopefully strengthen the alliance of unions within the public sector.

But while SARHWU is spearheading struggles in the dragon-head of the public sector, there is a growing realisation that the responsibility for all these crucial political tasks cannot be left to them, or even to the group of public sector unions. For too long organisations have been plagued with attitudes of "we are better" or "see, they are making a mess of it".

The major tasks of the labour movement now are to organise the public sector, the farms and the domestic sector. These are crucial sectors and they are the most difficult to organise. But the leadership in these unions has often had less experience, while experienced activists are concentrated in the well-established unions in the private sector. The lessons and styles of organisation gained from the progress of unions in the relatively far-sighted private corporations do not necessarily apply directly to the struggles in the public, farming or domestic sectors. But despite this, experiences and resources need to be shared. The struggle in the public sector should be the responsibility of COSATU, of progressive organisations dealing in the public sector, and

of the mass democratic movement as a whole. ☆

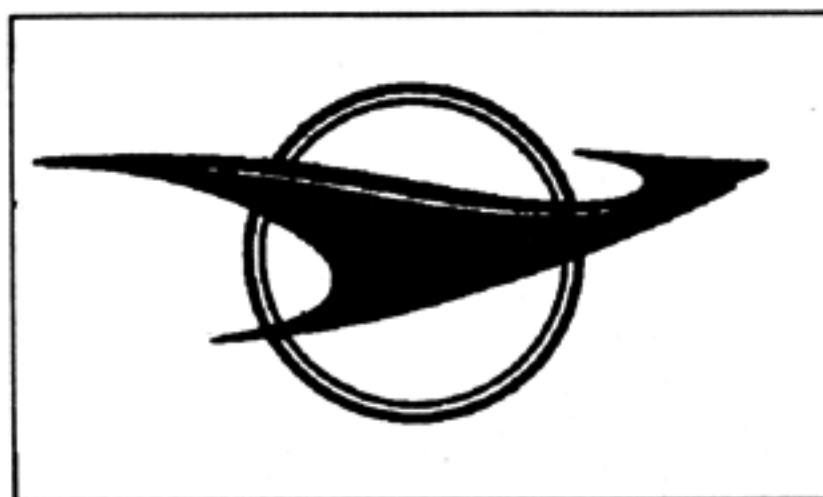
S.A. Transport Services

There is no doubt that SATS occupies an extremely strategic position in the economy. Not only does it monopolise the transport of goods by sea, air and pipeline, but it also transports a large proportion of the country's workers to and from their workplaces. Latest figures indicate that SATS's share of the road and rail goods transport market has dropped to 17%⁵.

While the harbour and pipeline divisions are the most profitable, and in fact subsidise the other divisions, on the whole SATS has been a drain on state resources. According to SARHWU this is due at least in part to mismanagement.

Transport has always been one of the major items on the budget allocation within the "Economic Service" function, and increased by 30% between 1985/6 and 1987/88. Thus in 1987/88, the transport allocation was R2,119,677,000, which was more than a third of the total Economic Services allocation of R6,248,468,000.

The SATS board is made up of the Minister of Trans-



port and 3 Commissioners appointed by him, and it reports directly to the State President. As a state corporation under the ultimate control of the Nationalist government, SATS has historically focused on keeping the costs of black wages down and maintaining sheltered employment for whites. Between 1980 and 1986 SATS reduced its workforce by 22%. Even with these massive redundancies, white workers' jobs were protected, as the Table 1 shows.

Control of workers.

The system of labour control over SATS workers, and particularly of African workers, is complex and severe. It has only been challenged by the General Workers Union in Port Elizabeth during 1982 and now by SARHWU. Essential elements of the

Table 1

	1975	1980	1986
African	117,775	126,176	95,305
Coloured	18,865	24,428	16,415
Indian	1,745	1,840	1,588
White	111,844	113,950	93,913
Total	250,209	266,403	207,221

(CSS 1987 Labour Statistics D1, D6)

system have been:

1. Strict racial division of workers;
2. Strict division of representation along lines of job category, through one of the 9 in-company staff associations;
3. Maintaining the majority of African workers at casual status, and therefore making them subject to a 24-hour notice period with no right to representation;
4. The hostel system which accommodates the majority of African workers;
5. Denial of workers' rights to freely associate with the union of their choice;
6. Exclusion from the scope of the Labour Relations Act, no recourse to the Industrial Courts, and the banning of strikes;
7. Total co-option of the leadership of staff associations to serve the bosses' interests. As one worker put it in 1982 when BLATU was hit by mass resignations in Port Elizabeth:

"BSA (BLATU) is a SATS toy. It is like Sebe or Matanzima. The officials of the BSA are people who are employed to blind workers, for the workers not to know their rights. They are paid much higher wages than the workers. They really represent the interests of the railway authorities."⁶

A few weeks later General Workers Union (GWU) members embarked on a go-slow in Port Elizabeth harbour, demanding the recognition of their union. They were dismissed two days later. The then Minister of Transport, Schoemann, tried to justify the system of repress-

ion at SATS, and more specifically, why SATS said that workers had "dismissed themselves" :

"It is necessary to point out that workers in SATS are not just workers in the strategic infrastructure service, but are also in the true sense workers from the state-controlled operation. As such these workers enjoy extraordinary above average conditions of service such as security of employment (SIC!) but on the other hand they are not allowed to strike."⁷

Commenting on why SATS was insensitive to the appeals by other influential employers that they should recognise unions independently of their internal system of labour relations, the General Secretary of GWU said:

" Because they're so powerful. And why they are so powerful is because they control the transport section of the country in an unprecedented way.... That makes them an institution of enormous power. Bosses are scared of them. Government is scared of them. And that's why they managed to remain impervious....It was really a situation that made David and Goliath look like a cakewalk for David."⁸

Ultimately the 1982 strike failed because it was confined to one harbour. In addition the Port Elizabeth harbour is not very strategic and was particularly slack at that time. As a result it became clear that any union that was going to breakthrough in one such a strategic sector, was going to need a national presence and a national strategy.

New laws at SATS

In the wake of the 1987 SARHWU strike the commissioners amended the SATS Conditions of Employment and in September 1988 these became law. What these amendments did was to make the SATS dispute procedure appear more democratic, thereby propping up the recognised staff associations. On the other hand, they still hope to permanently exclude SARHWU from participation.

The regulations makes provision for the establishment of conciliation boards to which any group of workers can refer grievances. In principal this means that SARHWU members can also refer grievances, but in practice SATS can refuse to appoint such a board.

The Bill also makes provision for a collective bargaining forum called a Labour Council, which resembles industrial councils. All recognised unions/staff associations may be represented, but only if a 3/4 majority of the Council accepts the union. SATS hopes hereby to exclude SARHWU from the council even if it is forced to recognise the union.

In addition, the new regulation still outlaws strikes and excludes "casual" and "contract" workers from participating in any of these new forums. ☆

Threat of privatisation

Like other unions in the public sector, SARHWU is facing the threat of privatisation by a management that is not prepared to negotiate. The pressure of not being able to negotiate on when, how and under what conditions the process of privatisation is going to take place has put enormous strains on the union.

General Secretary, Martin Sebakwane, says that rationalisation and redundancies are taking place as SATS tries to make itself more attractive to the private sector. In the Durban harbour, a coal-loading department was sold off to Rennies and at the Koedoespoort foundry, white workers are now doing unskilled work. Redundancies are not being negotiated and take place in "unseen"

Table 2

	1986	1987	1988	% decline 1987-8
AFRICAN	95,305	85,425		6%
COLOURED	16,415	14,898		8,3%
INDIAN	1,588	1,566		0,2%
WHITE	93,913	82,633		6,9%
TOTAL	207,221	198,980	184,522	6,5%

(CSS, 1987, Labour Statistics; Commission of Administration, June 1988.)

ways. The rate of dismissals is increasing and vacancies are not filled; workers are pushed to take ill-health and early retirement.

According to SARHWU, SATS confidently claims that privatisation is not going to have a drastic effect and talks about there being no visible effect for at least three years. But Table 1 above showed the employment figures up to 1986, and the situation has only worsened, as can be seen in Table 2 (See previous page)

SATS is also saying that privatisation is not going to change labour relations significantly in the transport services. SATS is saying that it will eventually consist of both a private company and a public company. While not being state-run, SATS as a whole will still be a statutory company, and as such it will escape being covered by the Labour Relations Act. Statements like this are completely confusing to the union and to everyone else. But until SATS recognises SARHWU the union will be unable to get clarity.

Crucial in confronting privatisation in the transport sector will be the relationship between SARHWU based in the public sector and TGWU which is based in the private sector. During the Durban strikes, both unions learnt that there is much to be done: while the stevedores who are TGWU members refused to do the work done by the striking SATS workers, there was little if any formal contact between the unions.

Privatisation has serious political implications for the people of South

Africa.

At the moment the S A administration in Namibia is privatising state services and enterprises such as the railways as rapidly as possible. The aim is to strengthen the hand of big business and weaken a future SWAPO government. This experience should serve to remind the progressive movement in South Africa that privatisation does not affect only the workers and unions in the public sector, but all people. ☆

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Treasurer: E. Sogoni;
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NACTU members launch a new metal union

In May this year, three NACTU unions came together to form a new metal union. JABU MATIKO was there to record the event and assess the implications for unity and organisation in the metal industry.

The launching of a new metal union called MEWUSA was the first implementation of the principle of one union one industry in the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) since it was formed in 1986. The union was launched against a background of co-ordinated state attacks against trade unions and the democratic movement, as well as tough annual wage negotiations with metal employers, who are also planning to deregulate some businesses in the metal industry. A problem for the unions in this contested terrain is the absence of any unity between COSATU and NACTU unions, and especially in the metal industry.

Against this repressive background, over 1,000 workers flocked to NASREC on the 27 May to launch the

Metal and Electrical Workers Union of South Africa (MEWUSA). Unions which participated in the merger are the Black Electrical and Electronics Workers Union (BEEWU), the Electrical and Allied Workers Trade Union (EAWTUSA) and the Engineering and Allied Workers Union (EAWUSA). The new union claims a membership of 69,000 paid-up members and 110,000 signed-up.

Workers sang freedom songs and engaged in *toyi-toyi* dancing before the congress started. After two hours of jubilation delegates and observers registered for the congress. Files which were handed out to delegates reminded them that the purpose of the Launching Congress was "to build bridges among the workers by merging the different unions to which they



Singing and dancing, delegates arrive at the MEWUSA launch

Photo: Labour Bulletin

belong into one union." The MEWUSA launching congress took place two weeks after NUMSA, the COSATU metal affiliate with 180,000 paid-up membership, held its congress.

The following office bearers were elected:

- President - Raymond Khoza from EAWTUSA,
- Vice President - Enos Ngobe from BEEWU
- General Secretary - Tommy Olifant from EAWTUSA
- Assistant General Secretary - Zithulele Cindi from BEEWU.

It took two years to form MEWUSA

The merger talks started in 1987 when nine unions that are affiliated to

International Metalworkers Federation (IMF) began discussing the possibilities of merging into one union. Five of them were NACTU members. At its congress in November 1988 the South African Council of the International Metalworkers Federation (IMF) adopted a resolution to support the merger of these unions. However, only three unions, all affiliated to NACTU, finally came together in MEWUSA. These were BEEWU, EAWTUSA, and EAWUSA. This left out five metal unions. Two of them, the Steel Engineering and Allied Workers Union (SEAWUSA) with a claimed paid-up membership of 30,000, and the United African Motor and Allied Workers Union (UAMAWUSA) claiming a paid up membership of 13,000, are NACTU

affiliates.

The other three unions are: South African Boilermakers Society, Radio and Television, and Engineering Industrial Workers Union. These three unions held the position that old unions must not disband, but instead a federation of metal unions should be formed. This contrasted with the model of a single new union which NACTU affiliates wanted.

NACTU affiliates stay out

NACTU affiliates SEAWUSA and UAMAWUSA say that their membership decided not to be part of the merger because the merger talks were handled in an undemocratic manner in their own unions.

According to Kgotso Kodisane, the new acting general secretary of SEAWUSA, the delegation which attended the merger talks and later became part of the steering committee was not mandated by the majority of workers in SEAWUSA. "There were no meetings to discuss the merger with the rank and file by way of giving report-backs and getting new mandates," he said.

Another issue which prevented SEAWUSA from continuing with the merger plans was the suspicion of corruption in the union. "At the special congress called to discuss the undemocratic process that characterised the merger plans in SEAWUSA, the general secretary, Jane Hlongwane, had been asked to prepare the union's financial statement. When she could not do this, the congress discussion

centred on the question of a financial statement. A decision was taken to hold another congress on 20 November. By that stage Hlongwane had resigned without giving any reason. So at the second congress members held that the merger was a ploy by the resigned official to sweep the corruption that had hit the union under a carpet. The congress resolved to establish a commission of inquiry in the financial matters of the union and suspended discussions on mergers."

UAMAWUSA's reasons for not merging into MEWUSA are similar. Peter Makgathulela, who is the acting general secretary, explained to the *Labour Bulletin* that their general secretary Dorah Mathe was suspended on 21 April this year pending a commission of inquiry into the financial matters of the union. Makgathulela claims that the union has so far established that Mathe owns a sewing project in Pretoria. It is suspected that the project was initiated by using money raised from overseas under the pretext of using it for the union affairs. When asked to comment on this situation, the NACTU assistant general secretary, Cunningham Ngcukana explained that the federation is not aware of these findings, but has sent UAMAWUSA's financial books to the auditors.

The two unions have presented the absence of democratic practises and financial corruption present in the former administration as the primary cause for not continuing their participation in the merger. Both unions have dismissed rumours that they are

not part of MEWUSA because of the political differences that have now emerged inside NACTU.

Kgodisane comments: "People who argue that SEAWUSA is now outside MEWUSA because of political differences are distorting our position." UAMAWUSA's Makgatlulela explained that, "MEWUSA cannot be grouped into the Africanist or the Black Consciousness group since EAWUSA is Africanist, BEEWU is BC, and EATWUSA being neutral, are all present in the new union."



MEWUSA birth is welcomed

NACTU was delighted by the formation of a giant metal union in the federation. NACTU president James Mndaweni told the MEWUSA congress that it was unfortunate that some NACTU affiliates could not immediately join the new union and stressed that MEWUSA will be guaranteed

support by NACTU.

NUMSA, the largest IMF affiliate, regretted the launch of a new metal union. However, one of its congress resolutions called for NUMSA and COSATU to put more effort in achieving one industry one union. NUMSA also instructed its central committee to push the IMF to re-open merger talks for *all* IMF affiliates, as agreed in the last IMF congress held 1988.

The only guest speaker from unions outside NACTU was from CCAWUSA. Mandla Seloane, an education officer in the Mtwana CCAWUSA wing, told the congress that the two unions must recognise each others right to exist. However, he challenged MEWUSA and NUMSA to be honest to the slogan of one union one industry, which both are vocal about.

Political resolutions

The first resolution reflected on the role of MEWUSA in the working class struggle in the country. It called for "support and co-operation with progressive political actions taken in the interest of working class struggle by democratic and worker controlled unions, federations and other progressive organisation." The union also resolved to give active support to all "progressive pro-worker" and "socialist" groups within the country. The union declared that the implementation of national and regional programmes directed at building working class links and unity between factory-based and community-based

struggles will facilitate the achievement of a "non-racial, non-Capitalist Democratic Socialist society".

On the question of the strategy and tactics to be adopted in changing the present political and economic system, the union denounced a negotiated settlement as a "manoeuvre by the imperialist powers to strike a deal with the present government to rescue Capitalism". This resolution cautioned that "a negotiated settlement with the South African government under the present set of circumstances can only lead to a betrayal of the working class, and must be rejected in the strongest possible terms." Other resolutions included the call for freedom of speech, the lifting of the state of emergency and release of political prisoners.

Tasks facing the new union

Some NACTU affiliates are outside MEWUSA, and that is a serious setback to unity of metalworkers in NACTU. However, the assistant general secretary of MEWUSA, Zithulele Cindi, is optimistic that SEAWUSA and UAMAWUSA will join MEWUSA once their internal problems are resolved. "MEWUSA is a NACTU project. MEWUSA will work closely with other NACTU metal affiliates. We will work closely together and persuade them to join," he said.

The other challenge facing MEWUSA on the question of worker unity is to forge unity with NUMSA. NUMSA has already established itself as the commanding force in the metal

industry. MEWUSA recognises the need to work with NUMSA. This encouraging direction has the potential of creating a powerful force if the two unions co-operate in joint campaigns. Joint campaigns unions will boost their ability to challenge the metal bosses. MEWUSA has 69,000 paid-up membership, while NUMSA has a paid-up membership of 115,000 in the iron and steel industry alone and about 73,000 in the automotive, motor, tyre and rubber industry.

Co-operation on the ground between MEWUSA and NUMSA members allow MEWUSA members to learn about the experiences gone through by NUMSA members in their past living wage campaigns and other struggles against employers. NUMSA's growth has always been rapid during its wage campaigns. After the 1988 living wage campaign NUMSA increased its membership by 10%.

What is encouraging is that MEWUSA has also committed itself to worker unity as a guiding principle. The union resolved at its congress to place unity of workers above the "narrow ideological interest of competing political factions".

Both NUMSA and MEWUSA support unity

If both MEWUSA and NUMSA are committed to unity in principle, the remaining question is how to achieve it in practice.

There are factors that could serve

as a basis for this unity. The primary factor is the affiliation of the two unions to the IMF and their membership of the metal industrial council. However IMF has been a problematic forum for union unity in the past. The experience of last year when the IMF alliance fell apart must be a subject for critical assessment in both unions. Caution is needed to avoid hardening of attitudes. The need for critical assessment and self criticism is posed by the challenge from the metal bosses. The lack of union unity, which is an advantage for bosses, is seen as a problem in MEWUSA. Cindi argues that it was "a miscalculation on the part of NUMSA to challenge metal bosses single-handed. This has allowed management to capitalise on the fact that there are different demands proposed by unions, especially those representing black workers."

NUMSA also sees the need for unity. Moses Mayekiso, the general secretary of NUMSA, told the *Labour Bulletin* "we regret that there should be another union cropping up instead of bringing the metal workers together. But we are open to meeting that union to at the end of the day form one metal union in this country."

Raymond Khoza, the newly elected President of MEWUSA, told the *Labour Bulletin* that they were approached by NUMSA at the Industrial Council wage negotiations on the 30 May for a joint caucus. "We (MEWUSA) indicated that we were prepared to have a caucus with NUMSA, but felt it was too late for our members to enter into such an alliance," he said.

Khoza is arguing that is too late to enter into an alliance because several wage talks have already taken place, with employers having made their final offer and unions preparing to declare a dispute. He implies that the absence of unity from the outset would be difficult to resolve at this stage. This argument is a debatable argument.

The two statements suggest that there is a narrowing of differences between the two unions on the question of an alliance during wage negotiations with employers. It remains to be seen how unity will be forged.

The IMF alliance broke down in 1988

When NUMSA pulled out of the IMF alliance in a living wage campaign last year, it was largely on the fact that IMF and NACTU affiliates were incapable of mobilising their members on the shopfloor. Meetings that were called by IMF unions to discuss the workers' wage demands were attended by NUMSA members. It was also NUMSA members who went on strike to pressurise employers to meet their demands.

Some NACTU spokepeople rejected this criticism. But Kodisane told the *Labour Bulletin* "the ignorance that prevailed in SEAWUSA on the question of mergers was also displayed during the industrial council wage negotiations. Members were in the dark. This explains why there was no action taken at the shopfloor by our members during the IMF wage

campaign".

The 1988 alliance of IMF unions is an issue to be subjected to critical discussion if unity between the two unions and other IMF affiliates is to be realised in future. At the present moment both SEA-

WUSA and UAMAWUSA said they needed a chance to establish democratic practices in their unions. MEWUSA has adopted a new structure at the congress. This structure - which is composed of shop steward committees at the local, regional and national level - is meant to facilitate the realisation of worker control and worker democracy, and not leaving behind worker unity.

According to Khoza, the new structure would allow the accommodation of different traditions that are brought by the unions that merged. "Seminars and an extensive educational process is going to be introduced to allow workers to acquaint themselves with these concepts," said Cindi.

The adoption of a new democratic structure is another positive development in the formation of MEWUSA. The importance of democratic union structures is that it instills in shopstewards and members the need to take initiative in their trade union. This is a



The new union's logo

long process, which requires patience and a lot of effort from the union organisers. Structures will make it possible for members and shop stewards to discuss important issues like worker unity at all levels of MEWU-

SA.

The other base for unity between NUMSA and MEWUSA is found in the conditions created by the new LRA. Unions have responded to this state onslaught by uniting together under the workers summit to discuss a response. MEWUSA and NUMSA will be able to participate in common campaigns against the labour law, because their respective federations have agreed to co-operate. However, it is at the factory level that unity between the two unions needs to be clearly established.

The formation of MEWUSA has been a positive development in the organisation of metalworkers, particularly in NACTU and generally in the labour movement. It has laid another base for the organisation of the metalworkers in South Africa. However, the bargaining position and political voice of metalworkers will be stronger when all metal unions come under one union, one federation. ☆

Garment and textile giant

The two major unions operating in the garment and textile industries will merge in mid-September this year and bringing together a total of 175,000 workers. They are COSATU's Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWUSA) and the independent Garment and Allied Workers' Union (GAWU). LABOUR BULLETIN correspondent reports.

The new union will be the third biggest in COSATU, after NUM and NUMSA. ACTWUSA will bring with it 71,000 members, most of them from Natal and Transvaal. Workers from the two provinces together make up 50,000 of ACTWUSA members. Most of ACTWUSA's Natal membership is concentrated in the textile in-

dustry, while a significant proportion in the Transvaal is employed in clothing factories. GAWU, by comparison has a token membership of only 1,000 in the Transvaal and OFS.

The majority of GAWU's 98,000 members are concentrated in the clothing industries of the Western Cape, where it represents 52,000 workers,



and Natal, where it has 46,000 members. Another important characteristic of its membership is that most are coloured and Indian women workers.

The new union's biggest region will be Natal where it will have a total of 76,000 members. From COSATU's point of view, the new union will be its biggest affiliate in both Natal and the Western Cape. This will have an important bearing on the effectiveness of the federation's national campaigns.

A lot still has to be done before these statistics become meaningful. But much has already been achieved since the initial meeting in December last year. The unions have reached agreement on a number of issues. Though not the most important issues, they have been significant enough to give both unions the confidence to commit themselves to unity in just over two months from now.

No-poaching agreement

One of the most positive agreements is the undertaking by both unions not to organise in factories where the other union exists. Poaching of membership by one union from the other has been the source of great hostility between them. One of the factors which made the unity talks necessary was the clashes between the GAWU and ACTWUSA membership in factories where both unions have a presence.

The unions have agreed that at two factories, Man About Town and Kingsgate, arrangements would be

made for joint representation. At the same time, ACTWUSA agreed to withdraw its application for membership of the Natal Clothing Industrial Council, on which GAWU is already represented.

As a demonstration of their commitment to the merger, the unions exchanged leaders. GAWU's Special National Congress was addressed by ACTWUSA's first vice president. In exchange, GAWU sent its treasurer to address the ACTWUSA Special National Congress. Another factor which has generated a sense of optimism is that all the merger committee meetings between ACTWUSA and GAWU have been conducted in a "comradely and constructive manner".

But there are differences, and important ones. Much still has to be done to allay the suspicions that exist among members, given the varying political traditions the two unions come from. In fact this is one of the reasons for GAWU seeking a postponement of the inaugural congress from July 1 to September.

In motivating a postponement, GAWU pointed out that unless there was a greater participation in debate and discussion of the merger at grass-roots level serious division could be created. It also pointed out that interaction between GAWU and ACTWUSA had been limited to leadership and merger committees. GAWU recommended that a programme to increase interaction of membership at all levels should be drawn up. It will be important to translate this programme into reality on the factory floor if the two



Garment workers at the launch of GAWU in 1987

Photo: GAWU

unions are to forge one identity and "foster a spirit of fraternalism" among their respective members. The history of conflict between the two unions makes this imperative.

Political policy differences

There are also differences on the question of political policy. The Freedom Charter is an important focus of these differences. While neither union has adopted the Charter, there is support for the document within GAWU's ranks. Neither union emerged from their respective SNC's with clear-cut positions on the document. GAWU committed itself to embarking on an intensive education

programme on COSATU's political policy and the Freedom Charter, as well as the ANC's constitutional guidelines.

ACTWUSA on the other hand has decided to initiate debate on the question of a workers' charter. But it clarified that the resolution calling for debate on the workers' charter did not mean opposition to the Freedom Charter. ACTWUSA also points out that the constitutional guidelines call for a charter protecting workers' rights. In ACTWUSA's view, the constitutional guidelines offer more scope for consensus, and therefore a broader basis for unity, than the Freedom Charter.

The question of alliances is also at issue. While ACTWUSA believes that

its leadership should not take up positions in organisations outside the union, GAWU encourages this. But both unions have committed themselves to finding common grounds on these issues. They have also stressed that neither side should make the merger conditional on a resolution of these differences. A resolution will nevertheless have to be found if the new union is to advance the struggles of the garment and textile workers. If anything, these differences guarantee lively debate in the new union, as well as within COSATU.

What must emerge from these debates and from common struggle in a single garment and textile union, is a new culture and a single identity. This will not be easy. The new union will be the only COSATU affiliate in which African workers will be in the minority. GAWU will bring with it a large majority of coloured and Indian workers, while ACTWUSA membership is mostly African.

New militancy among coloured and Indian workers

It would be incorrect to categorise the GAWU membership as conservative because of its dormant past. Perceptions of COSATU have changed radically in the last year among GAWU membership. There is a clear and positive identification with COSATU policy and this has become more apparent with every mass rally. Placards and union songs point to the development of a new and militant consciousness. The workers militancy

was developed in the living wage strikes and in the protests against the new labour law (LRA) last year. GAWU members launched wildcat strikes and protest against the LRA, while COSATU itself was inactive in the Western Cape.

GAWU's living wage campaign was also accompanied by militant action, the most significant of which was the Rex Trueform strike, where 2,000 downed tools for three weeks. This was the first major strike in the clothing industry in the Western Cape, and it generated massive support from other garment workers. There were wildcat strikes at a number of other factories in support of the living wage campaign. In fact, the increases negotiated at industrial council were the biggest ever won by the union in the Western Cape where the bulk of the GAWU membership is concentrated.

A militant shop steward leadership in the union also began to emerge. During the Build-a-Bridge campaign shopstewards won a promise from the city council that it would build a footbridge over a busy road. Militant shopstewards also met with S.A. Transport Services (SATS) to discuss grievances over changing train schedules that made them late for work. Shopstewards took the lead in these campaigns.

In an unprecedented show of organised worker strength, GAWU managed to convene a living wage rally of more than 6,000 members. This was by far the biggest gathering of workers in the Western Cape in recent labour history. All this shows that



ACTWUSA members in a demonstration against the new LRA

Photo: Chris Ledochowski/Afrapix

GAWU has been able to mobilise the latent militancy of its constituency more effectively than most would have expected, given its conservative past.

In Natal too GAWU has succeeded in mobilizing Indian women workers into militant struggles. The most surprising indication of this was the massive support for last year's 3-day stayaway in June.

ACTWUSA also has conservative traditions, drawn mainly from TWIU and GWIU which were former TUCSA affiliates. The third union which merged into ACTWUSA was NUTW, a militant former FOSATU affiliate whose main base was among textile workers in Natal. NUTW was

one of the COSATU affiliates which most consistently opposed alliances with community organisations.

Different traditions and cultures

The merger will therefore bring together various degrees of militancy, different political traditions and different cultures and this presents enormous challenges. It could also have positive implications. GAWU, for example, which is going through the wildcat strike phase, could draw on the important tactical lessons that the NUTW membership has learnt in the last ten years of factory floor struggles.

GAWU and ACTWUSA have agreed that the new union will seek affiliation to COSATU. This will introduce a new tradition into the federation - namely the tradition of closed shops. GAWU has closed shop agreements with the industrial councils in the Western and Eastern Cape as well as Natal. These prevent any other union from organising in the clothing factories. Closed shop are unprecedented in the history of the progressive labour movement. The existence of the closed shop in one of its biggest affiliates will certainly initiate a debate in COSATU around this issue.

COSATU unions have always operated on the basis of the principle of majoritarianism and a 50% plus one representation which ensured that no minority union would be given recognition. This was in line with democratic principles, the cornerstone of COSATU policy. But the amended labour law makes it an unfair labour practice *not* to recognise minority unions.

Closed shops were first raised in COSATU as a possible strategy to fight minority unions promoted by the LRA. GAWU's entry into COSATU will therefore contribute to the debate on how the federation should resist minority "fish and chips" unionism.

New base for COSATU in Western Cape

At another level, GAWU's entry into the federation has important implications for COSATU's presence in

the Western Cape. One of the major weaknesses in the federations' national network has been the absence in the Western Cape of structures that were comparable to those in the Transvaal, Eastern Cape and Natal. The type of unionism that emerged in the Western Cape failed to mobilise the majority of workers in the area, namely coloured workers, into action.

By comparison, GAWU has been able to mobilise this sector of workers into action around the same issues that are of concern in COSATU. The garment industry is the biggest in the Cape. The merger will root COSATU for the first time deeply in the communities of the coloured majority. In Natal too, the new union will bring a huge constituency of Indian workers into COSATU.

There are other plus factors for the organisation in the garment, textile and leather industry. The potential membership of 175,000 will cover almost all major factories and companies in every region in the country. This will place workers in the strongest position ever to consolidate national structures and demand a national industrial council for both the garment and textile sectors.

This has already become the focus of the living wage campaign in both GAWU and ACTWUSA. While GAWU has identified the need for a single national industrial council, in the garment sector, ACTWUSA has also moved to secure national recognition at major companies in the textile sector, among them Barlow Rand's Romatex. ☆

China: the democracy movement and reform

China has been in considerable turmoil for nearly two months. In the week ending June 10th, the army brutally crushed the democracy movement, killing hundreds if not thousands of people. How did the protests start and what do they mean? MELVIN GOLDBERG reports.

On the 15th of April this year Hu Yaobang died. The death of the former general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party can be seen as the immediate cause of the huge wave of protests which have spread throughout China since then. For the deeper causes one has to look at the economic and political changes that have taken place ever since the revolution of 1949. This report will confine itself to discussing some of the more recent events.

On Hu's death, demonstrations in favour of greater democracy broke out all over China. The previous demon-

strations in favour of democracy had taken place in 1986/7. Hu had been blamed for those protests and was dismissed from his post as the leader of the Party. Therefore, in the eyes of the students, Hu was the symbol of greater freedom. His death gave birth to the first independent student movement since 1949.

Although the majority of the demonstrators were students, they had the support of intellectuals and teachers, and as the protests grew, workers, journalists and others joined in. Thousands of students from all over China travelled to Tiananmen Square

in Beijing, being allowed to travel free on trains by sympathetic railway workers. At the same time there were protests in many other Chinese cities such as Xian, Guangzhou, Nanjing and the major industrial centre of Shanghai.

In addition, demonstrations in support of the Chinese students took place outside the People's Republic in Hong Kong, Macao and London among other places.

The government did not take immediate action, which at first sight seems puzzling. It seems that it was taken by surprise, both by the size of the demonstrations and by the extent of the support they inspired.

Also, mourning

the death of a former Party leader was quite legitimate, and the government had no idea how long it would last.

Most importantly, though, many of the leaders were sympathetic to the students' demands and the leadership

was clearly divided on what to do. The Communist Party newspaper, the *Peoples Daily*, accused the protesters of being anti-socialist and anti-Party. It very soon became clear, though, that not all the leaders of the Party agreed with this.

Divisions in the party

The students' protests not only created serious divisions in the Party leadership, but also within the



Calling for democracy, students erect a figure resembling America's Statue of Liberty - under the watchful eye of Comrade Mao

Photo: AP

army. Important figures in the military were opposed to the use of force, as a group of retired army marshalls (some of whom had participated in the Long March) made clear to the Party central committee. It has even been suggested that the Minister of Defence, Qin Jiwei, did not favour a violent response.

Therefore, before the government could respond, the hardliners had to secure a majority in favour of tough measures. The general secretary of the Party, Zhao Ziyang, favoured discussing the students' grievances.

But he was not able to win the backing of the central committee. He was dismissed from his position of general secretary, suffering the same fate as Hu Yaobang after the 1986/7 demonstrations.

The government was concerned about the threat that the demonstrations posed to their authority. They were also worried about the negative effects the demonstrations might have on foreign investors. They were in no mood to consider the students' demands. The most powerful figure in China, Deng Xiaoping, and the Prime Minister, Li Peng, rejected negotiations with the students. They declared martial law and ordered the army to break up the demonstrations.

There were rumours that the Beijing-based 38th army was reluctant to confront the demonstrators, so the Shanxi-based 27th army was ordered into action. Backed by two dozen tanks and armoured personnel carriers it slowly crushed resistance.

It seems though that some soldiers

were sympathetic to the demonstrators. There were reports that they were offering weapons to students at Beijing Normal University, and that there was some fighting among army factions.

The demands of the democracy movement

What do the students want? There are two main demands:

- for greater democracy within the Party
- for an end to corruption.

The students are not making a direct attack on the Party and they are not calling for the establishment of a multi-party system (as in Hungary). They want people to have a greater say in the election of candidates to the Party. They also want an end to privileges which Party members and their families enjoy, and an end to the practice of nepotism.

These two political demands need to be considered in the light of the economic changes that have taken place in China since the death of Mao Zedong in 1976. Mao stood for the primacy of politics and ideology over economics (although in reality he changed his mind on a number of occasions). For Mao, the road to socialism lay in changing people's consciousness. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1969), his policies caused serious economic crises, leading to a decline in the standard of living of workers. As a result, workers began to associate socialism with constant political meetings and low pay.

Workers became increasingly obsessed with wages and the Maoists accused them of economism.

Economic reform

The opposition to Mao came from those members of the Party who believed that the road to socialism lay in building up the economy. The policies followed under Mao had not achieved very impressive results. In fact, living standards fell steadily. Between 1957 and 1977 the average real wages of workers in state industries fell by 19%.

Mao's opponents took the view that rigid centralised planning was responsible for this. They argued that economic growth should take priority over politics and ideology, even if this meant a move towards a market economy. From 1978 major reforms were introduced, particularly in the rural

areas. The communes where people formed collectively, have been abandoned and family farming has been reintroduced. In the urban areas, small private operations from manufacture to transport to medicine and education were allowed, and these have grown steadily. Market socialism seems to have revived the economy but has also caused problems. Between 1978 and 1987 the value of agricultural output grew by 6.5% per year - an impressive figure compared to the average of 2.6% growth per year for the period 1952 to 1978. This growth is reflected in the improved wages and living conditions of the peasants. In the towns there is a better supply of food and agricultural raw materials for factories.

Reforms in industry, especially since 1984, have also improved output, although not as much as in the

“The picture is very clear. Out of a population of more than one billion, 800 million people live in rural areas and, for the most part, still use hand tools to make a living. A certain number of modern industries coexist with many industries that are several decades or even a century behind present-day standards. Some areas that are fairly developed economically coexist with vast areas that are underdeveloped and impoverished.....nearly one-quarter of the population is still illiterate or semi-literate. The backwardness of the productive forces determines the following aspects of the relations of production: socialisation of production, which is essential for expanded socialist public ownership, is still at a very low level; the commodity economy and domestic market are only beginning to develop; the natural economy and semi-natural economy constitute a considerable proportion of the whole; and the socialist economic system is not yet mature and well developed.” - Zhao Ziyang, addressing the Thirteenth Party Congress in October 1987. ☆



It was not only students who made up the crowd of protesters

Photo: AP

countryside. Between 1978 and 1987 industrial output increased by 12%. These high levels of growth, though, have also brought serious problems.

The most serious problem has been inflation. In the towns prices increased by about 40% between 1987 and 1988. Food prices increased even more - vegetable prices in the cities rose by 50% in 6 months in 1988! At first wage rises kept ahead of prices, but today workers' real wages are steady or falling.

Do these changes mean that China has abandoned socialism and is moving towards capitalism? Mao would certainly have argued that this is the trend. The current leadership believes, on the contrary, that socialism is still

on the agenda. They point to the fact that the state sector still accounts for most of the industrial output and industrial employment. Also, although private farming is now practised everywhere in China, the land is owned by the state and is only leased to families. The current leaders now believe that the Maoists moved too rapidly towards socialism and in doing so they damaged the economy and harmed the cause of socialism and the reputation of the Party.

Democratic reform

How do these changes relate to the current crisis? While economic reform has been brought about there has been

no fundamental change in the way politics has been organised. The Party largely decides for the people. In the universities and the factories, the party cadres are the most important people. There have been some changes (increasing separation of Party and government functions, greater authority for managers of state enterprises) but the students are demanding that greater democracy be introduced into Party politics. They do not seem to be criticising socialism or, in fact, saying much about it at all.

Their protests have led to a serious crisis within the Party. In spite of the fact that most of the current leadership supported the economic reforms they are divided on the need for political reform. Zhao Ziyang, who favoured discussing the students demands, was not able to win the support of the Central Committee, and he has been dismissed from his position of general secretary, suffering the same fate as Hu Yaobang. The most powerful figure in China, Deng Xiaoping, and the Prime Minister, Li Peng, have rejected negotiations with the students, at least for the time being, and they have won the current political battle among the leaders.

Does this mean that no reforms will be introduced? In my view, there is a general trend towards reform and it will come about in the near future in spite of the recent brutal crackdown. First of all, this is not the first movement for political reform. There is a long history of such protests in Chinese history dating back to the famous May 4th movement in 1919,

and since 1976 there have been a number of open calls for greater democracy. Secondly, China is desperately short of highly skilled people, and what we witness here is the call for greater freedom from those very people who will be responsible for China's future economic growth. Thirdly, it will not be long before some of the student protesters themselves assume political power. Unless they change their minds completely, it seems clear that even if the students have not prevailed on this occasion, their time will come.

Prospects for socialism?

But what about the prospects for socialism? This is a very difficult question indeed. Without going into detail, it seems that the economic reforms in China are likely to give rise to new economically privileged classes who will demand a political voice, but who will not necessarily favour socialism. The interests of the workers therefore need to be defended, and this can only be ensured by an independent trade union movement.

It is clear that neither a political party alone, nor a party together with the help of Party-controlled unions, can guarantee the interests of workers. An independent union is currently in the making but it is very small and has no power. There have been no demands for an independent movement along the lines of Solidarity in Poland. I am, however, certain that it will not be long in coming. (12.6.89) ☆

Trade unions in Communist China: new problems, new challenges*

When Mao Zedong died in 1976 the Communist Party of China under Deng Xiopong introduced a programme of economic reform and 'market socialism'. ANNIE SMYTHE describes 'market socialism' in China and the new problems it has created for workers. The Chinese experience contributes to the debate about the role of trade unions in socialist development.

I have sung the song of socialism for several decades, and my hair has gone grey, and at the end we found we were singing the tune of 'primary stage of socialism' - this move backwards is very worrying.
- Wuhan railway worker

I f the primary stage of socialism will take more than a hundred years, now I am thirty, I will have to live until I am over a hundred to see any sign of modern socialism.....that's not much fun, is it?
- young Chinese worker

* This article is based on the book 'Smashing the Iron Rice Pot' by Leung Wing-yue of the Asia Labour Monitor.

Workers in China started to organise a long time ago - at the beginning of this century. As struggles against the Emperor and western powers grew, so did the militance of workers. In 1921 the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) was formed. At first the CPC worked together with the nationalist Kuomintang. But in 1927 the nationalists turned on the communists and slaughtered them in their thousands.

Most communists left the cities. In the early 1930's, the majority of communists, under the leadership of Mao Zedong, went on the Long March, establishing themselves in the rural areas of China. Gradually they extended the area which they controlled. After the Second World War, fighting between the nationalists and communists became a full-scale civil war which the communists finally won in 1949.

The communist revolution brought great progress to the people of China:

- liberating peasants in the countryside from the oppression and exploitation of the feudal landlords;
- liberating China from the exploitation of foreign capitalists who had a stranglehold over industry in cities like Shanghai;
- opening the way to development of mining, industry and collective farming;
- replacing the starvation and misery of feudal China with food, housing, literacy, health care and



Party Chairman Mao Zedong announces the founding of the People's Republic of China in October, 1949

Photo: Smashing the Iron Rice Pot

education for all;

- making progress towards equality and dignity for all, especially for women.

But even while making this progress, Chinese communists have discussed and argued about the best way to build socialism. They all recognised that the majority of exploited were the peasants in the countryside, but they differed on who should form the vanguard of the revolution.

Although Mao (by then chairperson of the CPC) and his supporters proclaimed that the proletariat was the most progressive class, they argued that the key to building socialism in China lay in politicising and organising the peasants. Mao also argued that the party should 'put politics in com-

mand' - meaning that political consciousness and mobilisation of the masses was more important for building socialism than economic incentives or efficiency.

Other people like Liu Shaoqi said that socialism was the dictatorship of the working class. So China must build factories and modernise. Then China would have a big working class and money to pay for socialism. Liu and Deng Xioping argued that the party should 'put economics in command', stressing the importance of meeting the material needs of the people and developing an efficient economy.

Over the years, these differences resulted in deep struggles within the CPC. Nonetheless, for a long time China followed Mao's ideas on socialism. Most people worked for the Chinese government and most urban workers had one job for life. People called this guaranteed work from the government the 'iron rice pot'. On the other hand, the large number of migrant and contract workers did not have secure jobs.

Mao died in 1976, and this opened the way for his opponents, led by Deng, to establish their authority in the CPC. The Communist Party central committee announced reforms which they called 'The Four Modernisations'. Today Deng's government is smashing the iron rice pot. They say Mao's slogan "three people's rice shared by five people" has become "three people's work shared by five people". They say that there are too many workers in the factories, and

that they are not working hard enough. They say that the factories and industries of China are old and inefficient. They say that China is not moving forwards.

Deng's government believes that one of the main causes of these problems in China was that the state and the Communist Party directly controlled the whole economy. They decided it was necessary to introduce economic reform.

'The four modernisations'

The 'Four Modernisations' aimed to make the economy of China more modern and efficient. No longer would the central government and the party control everything.

'The four modernisations' is a programme which replaces mass mobilisation and politicisation with industrialisation and modernisation. To do this China needed 'market socialism' - where state-owned enterprises would compete with each other. Factories would have to cover costs and make a profit. Economist Huan Xiang said the policy was now a "a market economy led by a planned economy".

The state would continue to control and plan the economy overall - which is what distinguishes a socialist economy from a capitalist or 'market' economy. But the state would no longer try to plan and control the economy at every level as it had done before. The state would allow market forces such as competition, reward, profit and prices to determine more economic activity. Enterprises would

start to make decisions themselves.

Foreign companies would be allowed to invest in China and make profits. The Chinese government hoped that they would bring new machinery, technology and job opportunities with them. Party cadres travelled the world, looking at management methods and organisation in Europe, the United States of America and Japan.

The reforms in China raise critical questions about socialist development and 'market socialism'. Most socialists now agree that there has to be a mixture of 'plan' and 'market'. But what is the right mix and how should it be managed? These issues are facing the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and other socialist countries. They are in fact the key issues facing the world socialist movement today.

Before the reforms

The iron rice pot - life long jobs for many

Before the reforms, government or party officials decided who worked where. With a job went wages, housing, medical benefits, political activity, family planning, education, and pensions. Once you had a job, it was a job for life.

This system had many benefits for workers. But the problem was that most factories and offices were over-

staffed. Management could not dismiss unnecessary workers or lazy workers. Of the 130 million people in employment, about 30 million were unnecessary to production. And migrant and contract workers did not have secure jobs or the benefits that went with them.

Management and ownership

Ownership in China is based on the principle of workers being 'the masters in the house'. In the mid-1950's all factories and enterprises were nationalised. Private ownership was forbidden. All factories were now owned by the state and controlled by the Communist Party.

The highest authority in the factory was the Communist Party committee, headed by the party secretary. Plant managers reported to the party committee, as did trade unionists and workers' congresses. In some factories 30% of the staff were unproductive officials. This bureaucracy was inefficient and factories were wasting money. Party and union cadres often used their positions for their own personal privilege. And although workers were supposed to be 'masters of the house', the reality was that they usually had very little say in the factory.

Wages

Wages were paid on the principle of 'to each according to their labour'. Wage grades were worked out by the central government. For example, a



After the revolution, the Party stressed that women were to enjoy equality with men and some important steps were taken in this direction

Photo: Smashing the Iron Rice Pot

nurse's labour was worth one and a half times a driver's labour. Wage increases were automatic. They depended on how long people had worked and on their level of skill - rather than how well or how hard they worked.

Women at work

After the Communist Party took power, they stressed that women must be free and treated as equals. They said that, like men, women must have the right to work. One slogan was "Whatever a man can do, a woman can do". To make it possible for women to work, there were well established maternity benefits. Women were allowed time off work for breast-

feeding and most factories had child-minding services.

In the cities women worked next to their men for the first time. They enjoyed a status and dignity that few women had had before. Despite this, they earned less than men and were generally solely responsible for domestic work.

Trade Unions

When the Communists gained control over the whole of China, the unions first acted as watchdogs over the bosses and landlords. But when all private property was nationalised in the mid-1950s, they no longer needed to do this. So the question arose -

were trade unions necessary in a socialist society?

Everyone agreed that there should be unions. But they disagreed about what the unions should do. Some people - Deng Xiaoping was one - felt that even in a communist society workers still need an organisation to look after their interests. They said that trade unions must be independent of the state and the Communist Party. The chairperson of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) criticised unions for always siding with the party. He argued that "as an organisation of the masses a trade union must unfold its own independent activities."

Others, like Mao Zedong, felt that the unions must mobilise the workers. They said the unions must be under the control of the party and educate their members to work harder to build socialism. Unions should look to the long-term interests of the country rather than the immediate interests of the workers.

There was a struggle between these two positions in the late 1950s. Eventually those activists who said the unions should be independent were found guilty of 'economism' in 1957. They were purged from the party and the unions.

After this the unions became even less independent. They were controlled by the party. Leadership and officials were appointed from above rather than elected from below. Their main job was to look after the welfare of the workers, such as housing, pensions and education.

The struggle in the Party came into the open again in the mid-60's. Once again, 'economistic' unionists were purged and unions became very weak.

Changes in the factories

More responsibility for management

The most radical changes in Chinese industry are in the way factories and enterprises are managed. In the last five years, the government has suggested a number of different management schemes. All the schemes aim to give the managers of enterprises more decision-making power, in place of the party committees.

The reforms are aimed to make the managers responsible for running the factory, for keeping costs down and making a surplus or profit. They emphasise that managers should be trained professionals.

The emphasis in factories is now on producing efficiently and covering costs. Instead of lifelong appointments managers can be fired for doing a bad job. Most managers are appointed by the state, but in 3,000 state owned enterprises managers are subject to reappointment by workers' congresses every four years.

Other schemes which increase the power and responsibility of managers are sub-contracted management and

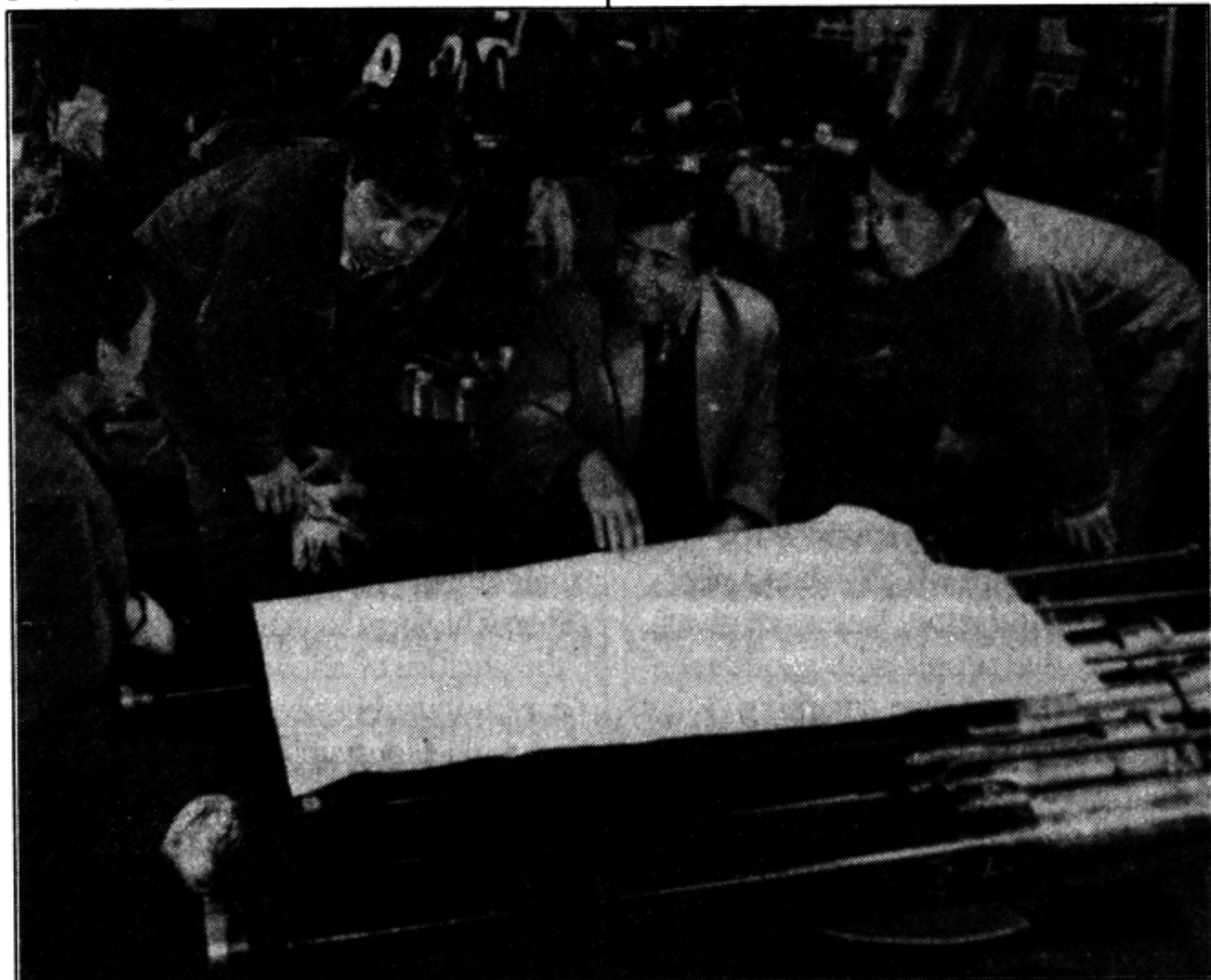
leased enterprises. These allow the manager to rent the factory, or to take a contract to manage the factory. In both cases it is up to him to produce a surplus or profit. The factory and machines remain the property of the state.

In the last few years there has also been an increase in private ownership in China. At the moment 2% of national industrial output is from privately owned factories. China aims to allow this to increase to 10%, employing 36 million people.

The CPC general secretary explains this policy: "Public ownership

should remain predominant in the primary stages of socialist society. However, other sectors of the economy that are not owned by the whole people such as co-operative, individual and private sectors should be encouraged to expand. Practice has proved that a certain degree of development of the private sector promotes production, stimulates the market, provides employment and helps in many ways to meet the people's needs."

But with the carrot comes the stick. The state is using the threat of bankruptcy for the first time since the



Under management reforms, all factories are encouraged to be profitable, but at what cost to jobs and workers? This plant made a profit after three years under new management.

Photo: Smashing the Iron Rice Pot

Communists took over. In 1986 warnings were issued to three factories which were making losses. They were given a year to stop losing money. With state help two of the factories were able to do this. The third was closed down and workers lost their jobs. This is likely to happen more often as efficiency and productivity become the priority.

Criticisms of the management reforms

The reforms give managers more power and responsibility. But what about the workers? People say that companies' financial progress is being put before workers' well being. They say that the reforms are undermining the principle of workers being the 'masters of the house'. The reforms allow managers to behave in a dictatorial way. People say the reforms will only work if managers use them democratically - otherwise there will be much conflict.

Already workers are unhappy about the way in which management contracts and factory leases are given. They say that people with good '*guan-xi*' - connections - are enriching themselves as they always get the contracts and leases. They say that workers are not consulted although the law says they must be.

A worker at a shipyard threatened with bankruptcy comments: "Owners of private enterprise in Wenzhou are getting rich while we workers lead a life on the margins, with just enough to eat and wear. Our fate is closely

linked to the fate of the enterprise. I have no capital nor any social connections to help me start a new career."

However, workers in other factories, such as in the city of Wuhan, are gaining many benefits from the reforms. (see box on page 124)

Employment reforms

The state has made big changes in employment policies. Now enterprises can choose their own workforce and they may retrench unproductive workers. Managers in state enterprises are afraid of a backlash so as yet very few people are retrenched.

Workers are very unhappy about the employment reforms as they have introduced job insecurity and competition for work. Before the reforms job security was seen as a basic human right for urban workers.

Wage reforms

Wage reforms have started a debate over what "to each according to their labour" means. According to Zhao Zhiyang the main problem is "the practice of allowing everyone to 'eat from the big rice pot', egalitarianism and jealousy of other's higher incomes."

Government policy is to reward hard work and good work through bonuses and piece-rates, and to encourage greater wage differentials. Reformists believe this will increase productivity and efficiency. Now for the first time, enterprises can set their own wages - but the government in-

sists that wage increases are linked to the performance of the enterprise.

Wages are beginning to vary greatly. There is a big difference between state and private enterprise. For example, a state owned factory worker can earn 120 yuan while a taxi driver in Shenzhen SEZ earns 1,000 yuan a month. Factory managers earn even more. Inequalities are becoming greater.

Women

The reforms have had a disastrous effect on the position of women in China. By law managers must still give women the same support as before - maternity leave, creches, breast-feeding time. But managers say this pushes up their costs so they don't want to employ women.

Now that managers and bosses can choose their workforce, managers are either employing men, or young girls before they have babies. Since the reforms women are complaining about discrimination, unfair dismissals, lack of training, demotion, and wage cuts during maternity leave or breast-feeding time.

The All Chinese Women's Federation is worried: "There is a small number of people in our society calling for women to return to the family. We cannot agree to this. It has not been easy for women to get out of their families, to work and contribute to the causes of revolution and socialist reconstruction. Women must maintain their dignity and self respect by striving to improve their abilities

and status. Furthermore society must do more for the emancipation of women such as opening more creches, nursery schools and canteens, developing instant foods and promoting the socialisation of household chores in order to lighten the burden of the Chinese women."

The state and the unions have tried to fight discrimination against women. The state has made it an offence to fire a woman during maternity leave or breastfeeding, or to reduce wages. The unions have called for women's committees to be formed in every factory. But neither the managers nor union branches follow all directives.

Workers congresses

The reforms have also reactivated and strengthened the workers' congresses in order to "extend socialist democracy and socialist rule of law". The workers congress is a council of representatives in each workplace. The representatives are elected from each section of the enterprise. Technical staff and management are also represented, but there is a majority of workers. The worker congresses have been given more powers, which casts some doubt on the role of trade unions.

The tasks of the congresses are to safeguard and develop the rights of unions and workers, discuss key decisions, and monitor management (see page 122). Unlike trade unions, congresses are independent of the party and have real grassroots structures.

But in many cases the congresses

have power on paper only. A congress chairperson at one factory was transferred and lost pay because he had criticised management. Workers commented: "Talk about democracy all day long, but we can't even speak the truth at our workers' congress." However, in areas such as Wuhan, congresses and unions are very strong (see box).

The trade unions

The reforms have created a situation where there is an increasing conflict of interests between managers, who are pushing for higher

productivity and harder work, and workers.

This raises a question for trade unions: will they take up and defend workers' interests where necessary? The party expects the unions to support the reforms. But in many ways the economic reforms make life for union members more difficult. In China people can choose wherever to belong to a union or not. But every enterprise or factory must have a union.

Up until now the unions have looked after the welfare of their members - they make sure there are breastfeeding and child care facilities for women; that old people get their

The workers' congresses

Government regulations set out the rights and responsibilities of the workers' congresses:

The workers congress can discuss and adopt resolutions about the long-term and annual plans of the enterprise, about new technology and machines, about on-the-job training, and about investment.

It has the right to discuss and approve pay scales, bonuses, disciplinary action and other management regulations, and also the way management organises production.

It can decide on major issues affecting workers' welfare, including the use of the enterprises' welfare and housing funds.

It can examine and supervise the performance of management personnel, and make recommendations about their reward, punishment, appointment and removal.

It can recommend candidates for directors or managers, or elect them. ☆



Union officials from a factory of the Wuhan Steelworks

Photo: Smashing the Iron Rice Pot

pensions and that the disabled are looked after.

At the moment unions are under great pressure to change both from above and below. The chairperson of the Chinese union federation said in self-criticism: "Our trade unions are not seen by the majority of workers as really their own organisations representing their own interests... we did not really defend the workers interests by speaking or working for them. Thus the trade unions have become only an organisation propagandising and mobilising workers..."

The new reforms have seen a big increase in the number of labour disputes. Most disputes are about wage

and bonus issues, housing, overtime, health and safety or abuse of power by management.

In 1982 the ACFTU said strikes were unnecessary as there was no class conflict in China, so most strikes are unreported wildcat strikes. A year later the ACFTU leadership conceded that work stoppages were permitted in the face of danger at work. But generally strikes are frowned upon.

The party and state are discussing changes that cover how union representatives are chosen. There is talk that elections will be more open and that trade union officials must be accountable.

From the factory floor workers

have criticised trade union officials. They say officials are bureaucratic and officious. They want trade unionists to be more democratic. Workers want the right to nominate people for positions in the union movement. They want chairpeople and vice-chairs to be chosen by the rank and

file rather than by the Communist Party. Workers also want the right to fire trade union officials when necessary.

So far the trade unions have had no right to bargain with management. But in 1988 a new law gave trade unions the right to represent em-

Wuhan and economic reform

Wuhan is a big industrial city in the middle of China. Wuhan has a long history of strong union organisation. The government is using Wuhan to test out the reforms. The unions in Wuhan have played an active role in discussing and putting the reforms into practice.

The unions in Wuhan see their role as disciplining and educating workers in socialist principles. They safeguard the democratic and economic rights of workers and they represent workers in dealings with the state and the party. Workers elect reform delegations who advise the government and the party on reform.

But the unions also see their job as educating factory managers to accept reform. Since 1984 the workers' congresses have elected 2,000 factory managers. The unions also watch management and department heads to make sure that they behave democratically.

The unions in Wuhan say that retrenchments cannot be made without union approval; that after 15 years of contract work, a worker must be given permanent status; that all employees must get state insurance, a pension and other welfare rights - not just permanent workers.

Wuhan unions are encouraging workers to participate in reform. In the Wuhan Steelworks the union circulated 20,000 questionnaires about new wage policies. Using the answers on the questionnaires, the union then worked out a wage system which was acceptable to the workers. This was discussed in worker congresses and then submitted to management. Most of the union proposals were accepted.

A group of 600 workers have offered to watch price increases and the quality of goods on the market in an effort to limit inflation.

The unions in Wuhan have used the economic reforms. The reforms have given workers much more say and control over their lives. But is this possible in other areas where the unions have not always been so strong? ☆

ployees and to sign collective agreements. Although at the moment this only applies to privately-owned factories, it gives the unions a chance to fight for better working conditions for their members - something which opens a potential new role for unions in China.

'Market socialism'

The reforms of 'market socialism' in China show some of the complex problems facing any people which chooses the socialist path of development. On the one hand the 'iron rice pot' protected workers and gave them dignity and many benefits. On the other hand, rigid control of the economy by the party and the state was not efficient. Development was slow, and the country remained poor.

With the death of Mao the reformists decided to smash the 'iron rice pot' and introduce 'market socialism'. While this may bring economic growth, higher wages and more goods in the shops, it also brings inflation and increases the problems for workers. They have to work harder, and they can lose their jobs. Groups such as women, the elderly and the unemployed become more vulnerable. Although economic development may benefit everyone, there are increasing inequalities of wealth.

In many factories workers lose their dignity and have to submit to dictatorial management. Conditions are worst in the SEZ, as the Sanyo strike shows (see page). In other areas such as Wuhan the reforms have streng-

thened the position of workers and their lives have improved.

'Market socialism' has brought both benefits and problems to China. The CCP leadership says that this is necessary, because China is still in the 'primary stage' of socialism, and it is a long road to 'modern' socialism. Many workers fear that this is simply an excuse to introduce capitalist policies.

These experiences will deepen the debate about socialist development. The reforms also raise important issues about democracy and socialism. Under Mao there was very little democracy, but generally the party protected the interests of workers. But the reforms mean the Communist Party is withdrawing from too much control over the workplace and the economy. This can mean that workers lack protection from management. But it can also mean that the unions and congresses are more independent and they can organise themselves better.

The power of management has increased, but the potential power of the workers congresses and the unions has also increased. There are contradictory forces in the workplace and the economy: market socialism has liberated forces for more democracy in the workplace, as well as forces for less democracy. The forces for workplace democracy are only likely to dominate if the party and the state encourage congresses and unions to build powerful grassroots democracy so that they can represent the masses.

These are some of the problems

which are facing unions in China today. How the unions, the party and the state tackle these problems is not just important for China. It is important to working people throughout the world. It is important for our understanding of what socialism is, and what it can be. ☆

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and foreign investment

"I don't understand why we have to enter into joint-ventures with bosses, and why the masters of our country, the workers, have to work for capitalists. Are we really that poor that we can't even have that dignity? Goddamn it, I've worked for thirty years and still have to serve dishes to capitalists. But then again it's true that in these several years all my colleagues' and my living has got much better. Now everybody's got TVs, fridges, hi-fis and washing machines. It is all the result of joint ventures. But it is bloody depressing to think that we have worked for several decades to come back to, 'Mutual benefits between capitalists and the proletariat!' But then again if we wait for state invest-

ment only, when will we ever have these luxuries? It's a difficult question isn't it?"

(Restaurant worker, Shenzhen Special economic Zone, 1987)

Special economic zones (SEZs) were started in 1978 when China opened the door to foreign business for the first time since the fifties. China, said the leaders, needed western technology and foreign exchange.

The SEZs in China are similar to other export processing zones in Taiwan, Korea, Malaysia and the Phillipines. Foreign companies are offered free land and building equipment, cheap labour, and no import duties on raw materials and equipment. They can operate tax-free for the first two to four years and thereafter the taxation is low.

Shenzhen, on the coast, is the biggest SEZ. The industrial output of Shenzhen has increased a lot. Wages have also increased but Shenzhen has the highest inflation rate in China. The inflation eats up a large part of the wage increases.

Many people question the economic success of the SEZs. They say they are not bringing much foreign exchange or technology into China.

There are also big social problems in the SEZs. Prostitution and black marketeering have spread. But the biggest problem is the way in which workers are treated. People will choose to work in foreign owned enterprise because the wages are higher. But workers do not like the way in which managers behave. Workers feel



1985 - Finnish and Chinese representatives discuss business - part of China's opening up to foreign investment

Photo: Smashing the Iron Rice Pot

that they have no dignity at work, they are not the 'masters of the house' as they are in state-owned factories.

Often people are forced to work overtime. In 1986 Shenzhen workers complained that "workers in some factories work overtime of six to eight hours. Some have fainted as a result while others were injured by the machines."

Foreign firms complain that there is too much welfare, while workers complain that too many concessions are being given to foreign business. The government tries to get foreign business to contribute to various social security insurance schemes. There are also many temporary workers in

Shenzhen - people say there are about 190,000 migrant workers.

The state treads lightly with foreign business - they do not want to upset foreign investors. The unions take the lead from the state. They try to keep the peace between workers and foreign bosses, rather than helping workers.

The chairman of the Shenzhen Municipal Federation of Trade Unions spells out how he sees the role of unions: "Foreign investors do not understand the role of our trade unions. We have to convince them that trade unions in China are to unite workers to contribute to the well-being of the enterprise, unlike those in foreign

countries which aim at defeating their bosses."

In the SEZs the unions try to avoid strikes by smoothing over disputes before the workers stop work. But the number of wildcat strikes are growing as workers fight against bad working conditions.

A short strike in Shekou

Shekou is the industrial area of the Shenzhen SEZ. This story is based on an article in a magazine which was later closed down for 'bourgeois liberalism'.

A cream-coloured minibus stopped outside the workers' dormitories of the Sanyo-Semiconductors Factory. Most of the workers were at work. A few, who were off-duty, were busy minding their own business.

In the Sanyo workers' dormitories, there were 8,000 workers from all over the country aged between 16 and 23. In order to work here they had to leave home. Life was boring here - workers soon discovered that such boredom was worse than death.

The cream-coloured minibus was here to take two workers away - they were fired and were about to be returned from where they came. To be fired was something strange to most people who did not work in SEZs. But to workers here it was part of the routine. Unfortunately workers who were fired had nowhere else to find work. From here they were sent back to their home towns and never given another job.

The two workers on the minibus

were Zheng Chengjun, a man, and Chen Qiongqi, a woman. Both were 22 years old. They were contract workers and they had worked in the factory for less than ten months. They envied those working in state-owned factories. As a Japanese-owned capitalist company, Sanyo's sole interest was to make a high profit.

To the workers the boss was someone who drove you at work, regarded you as part of the conveyor belt. When Zheng and Chen were recruited, they were told they would get wage increases after three months. After ten months they still had not got an increase, so they decided it was time to do something.

That night Chen sat up and together with 21 other people, they wrote a letter to management.

The next day, when the workers stopped for breakfast, they went to their dormitories and refused to return to the factory. The manager called the union and party committee who went to the dormitories to do 'ideological work'. The cadres asked the workers over and over, "Why don't you go to work?"

A group of silent workers faced the cadres. At first they refused to open their mouths and speak. But after an hour the workers agreed to go back to work.

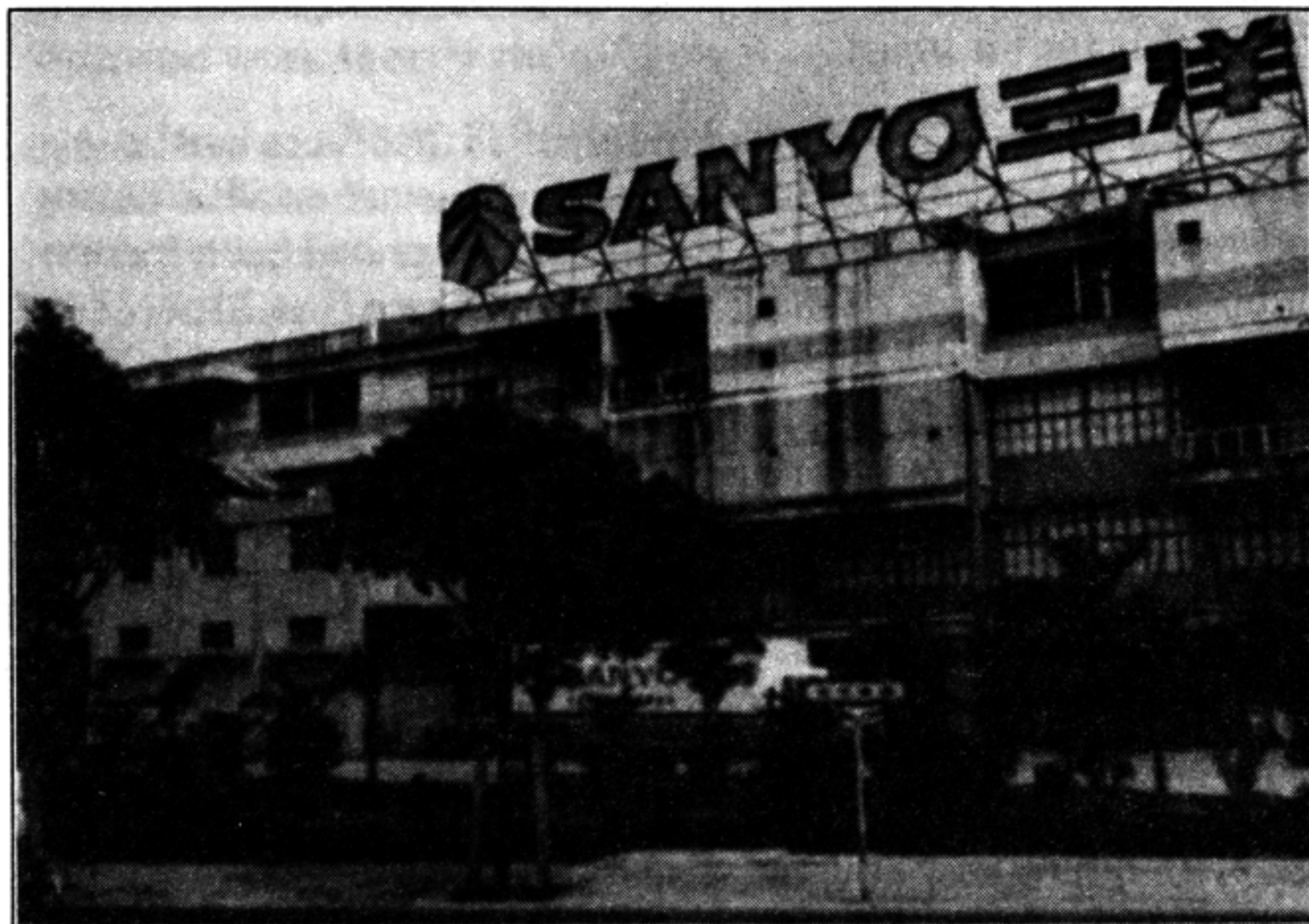
As they were leaving the dormitories, Zheng suddenly said, "If anyone can beat me arm-wrestling, they can go back to work." Everyone knew they would lose as Zheng was big and strong. So they all started to laugh and went back into their dormi-

tories.

The cadres were angry. They had to start their 'ideological work' all over again. At 7 that evening they went home for dinner and come back shortly. At last the workers agreed to go back to work. The strike had lasted over ten hours.

other workers were each fined 60 yuan for taking part in the strike

Sometime later there was a seminar for young cadres at the Party Committee Offices. During a heated discussion, one young man asked why the Sanyo strike was not reported in the newspaper. The other people at



The SANYO plant in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone

Photo: Smashing the Iron Rice Pot

Sanyo invited the union to dine at the Chinese Villa - a fancy restaurant. The atmosphere was friendly.

The day after the strike Chen Qiongqi got up as usual and went to work. Until midday she and Zheng Chengjun did not know they had been fired. They were fired, not by Sanyo, but by the Chinese. And so they got on the cream-coloured minibus and were taken back to Raoping. The

the seminar did not know what this cadre wanted. The strike was a small incident, caused by young and immature workers. And anyway, according to the zone regulations strikes were forbidden.

The people at the seminar went back to discussing what the central force in Shekou was and whether enterprises should follow Japan and have slogans and uniforms. ☆

May Day 1989

by DAVID FIG*

Every year workers around the world gather on 1 May to remember their own struggles and those of their comrades in other countries.

In South Africa, there were celebrations on May Day in big cities but also in some smaller towns for the first time. This year Botha's Day (so-called 'Workers' Day') was to be on Friday 5 May. But the government changed it to the 'first Monday in May' so it coincided with May Day. They wanted to avoid a stayaway on May Day. And next year - will they make Botha's Day the 'first Tuesday' of May? Or will they at last recognize the demand of workers to celebrate International Workers Day.

Solidarity in Southern Africa

At May Day rallies all over South Africa this year, for the first time there was a special focus on the conditions of workers in another country.

At most rallies, workers expressed solidarity with their struggling comrades in Namibia.

Speakers from Namibia addressed some of the rallies and told of changes in conditions for workers since the setting up of the new federation, the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW). They spoke about strong links that are being built between NUNW and COSATU. Speakers pointed out that because of the many years of South African control over Namibia, the Namibian labour movement faced the same enemies as South African workers.

Across the Orange River, in Namibia itself, a number of rallies took place under the banners of the NUNW. They were organised at Mondesa in Swakopmund, at Katutura in Windhoek, at Mariental, and at Oshakati in the north. At Oshakati a crowd of thousands ended their rally with a victory march and a motor cavalcade through the streets.

* David Fig is a staff member of International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG), Cape Town.

The Katutura rally was addressed by Moses Mayekiso, general secretary of NUMSA, who was recently acquitted on a charge of treason. He stressed the need for workers to build strong organisational structures which are accountable to the masses. Comrade Moss also demanded that the United Nations must order South African troops in the north of Namibia back to their bases.

At the same rally, the general secretary of the Mineworkers' Union of Namibia, Ben Ulenga, spoke about the need for workers to defend the gains they had made. He warned employers there could be a general strike if government plans for privatising public services goes ahead. He urged workers to be vigilant because South Africa was still threatening the chances of independence.

Solidarity links between the workers of Namibia and South Africa help to combat apartheid and military aggression in the region.

Workers defy repression and challenge imperialism

As usual, SABC television ignored the peaceful May Day rallies in South



Build solidarity action with Namibian workers and youth

Africa and Namibia. This is no surprise since the SABC always ignores the celebrations and struggles of workers and the oppressed in our country.

But this year it broadcast pictures of violence in the streets of many other countries. The government was trying to show viewers that May Day is a day when workers riot.

What the news did not show was the background to these conflicts.

The most serious problems occurred in South Korea, Turkey and the Philippines. Each of these countries has a government which faces an economic crisis and wants the workers to carry the burden of this crisis. Repression of the unions and assassinations of leaders are common. In these countries the military is very powerful even though civilians are running the government.

In South Korea, the government tried to stop all May Day celebrations. In the capital city, Seoul, the site of last year's Olympics, over 6,000 workers were arrested when police tried to prevent a rally called by the labour movement. In the southern city Changwon, police prevented a rally from happening. Later strikers at seven

WE DEMAND 1 MAY AS A PAID HOLIDAY

INTERNATIONAL

firms mobilised a crowd of 10,000 workers on the picket lines. The riot police dispersed the crowd after mass arrests.

Workers in Turkey have become more militant after nine years of repression. The celebration of May Day has been banned since 1980. Even so, some of the big unions planned May Day rallies for 600,000 workers around the country, but the government forced them to call it off at the last moment. In Istanbul, the biggest and most industrial city, unorganised anti-inflation demonstrations went ahead. Over 18,000 riot police and commandos dispersed the crowds of workers using batons and firing warning shots. 36 people were injured and 8 of them were wounded by gunfire.

More police violence was used in Manila, the capital of the **Philippines**, against a crowd of 5,000 people who were marching on the US embassy. The march came at the end of a workers' rally organised by the First of May Federation - **Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU)**, a major trade union grouping. At the rally, KMU leaders called for a general strike to demand a higher minimum wage. Wages are not keeping up with inflation. The minimum wage is R7,50 a day. Workers are demanding an increase to R10,55 a day.

KMU blames the Aquino government for making workers pay for the debts of the former Marcos dictatorship. The debts are owed to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. To help pay them, Mrs Aquino allows the US to rent three major military bases outside

Manila. These bases were used by the US to wage war against the people of Viet Nam. The KMU and the Filipino people have demanded their closure, claiming that the bases are evidence of US imperialism in South-East Asia. The march to the US embassy on May Day was aimed at expressing these demands. 70 people were hurt and worker representatives said at least 100 were arrested. According to KMU, nine workers are still "missing".

The existence of officially sponsored vigilante groups and the disappearance and assassinations of Filipino activists remind us of the position in our own country. On May Day we mourned the assassination of human rights activist Dr David Webster by a local death squad.

The Philippines was not the only country to have worker protests against the United States on May Day. In the small Central American country of **Honduras**, which for many years was used by the US as a base against neighbouring Nicaragua, the people used the occasion of May Day to demonstrate against the US military presence. In six cities over 50,000 people gathered to protest and burn US flags.

Socialism and democratisation

In the socialist countries, May Day is marked by public holidays and traditional parades.

This year the celebrations reflected the new emphasis on change, and the continuing debates around the



1989 May Day rally at Sharpeville

Photo: Labour Bulletin

questions of political participation and appropriate economic policies.

In the Soviet Union, the famous Moscow May Day parade through Red Square, reviewed by the Politburo, was kept as informal as possible. This year the military bands were replaced by athletes performing to rock music. Giant balloons were flown and a carnival atmosphere gave enjoyment to all the participants. Banners hailed the recent elections of a new representative body, the Congress of People's Deputies, which meets for the first time later in May.

Another slogan condemned the resurgence of nationalism in the republics of the Soviet Union. In the republics of Georgia and Azerbaijan, May Day marches were cancelled for

fear that they might be turned into nationalist demonstrations. The Soviet Union has recently clamped down hard against such demonstrations, especially in Georgia, where police had opened fire on a demonstration in April, killing a number of people.

As in the Soviet Union, reform is also on the agenda in Poland, where the government recently legalised the independent trade union Solidarnosc. Free elections have also been announced for some seats in parliament. In Warsaw, the Polish leader, General Jaruzelski, kept his remarks brief at the shortest official May Day rally since 1945. After the rally about 100,000 Solidarnosc members thronged the streets for the rest of the day, hoping to build support for their

LONG LIVE INTERNATIONAL WORKER SOLIDARITY!

candidates in the June elections.

But not all independent trade unionists supported the deal which made Solidarnosc legal. Many accuse union leader Lech Walesa of selling out to the union's traditional opponents - the Polish government. In the cities of Gdansk and Wroclaw, where this feeling is strong, worker demonstrations on May Day were broken up by police.

Like Poland, the government of Hungary has legalised independent trade unions, which this year held separate May Day rallies from official ones.

In Czechoslovakia, where the government has resisted Gorbachev-style reform, police attacked some May Day demonstrators. After the official rally in the capital city, Prague, police tore down the portraits of Mikhail Gorbachev held up in protest by a crowd of 100 young people who felt that the pace of reform in Czechoslovakia was too slow. "Gorbachev is watching you!" they shouted at the police. Protesters were chased and beaten and some arrests were made.

In the run up to May Day, there were massive demonstrations in China, mostly by students calling for the government to implement a more rapid reform programme. A 32km march of 100 000 demonstrating students demanded the legalisation of unofficial student unions. On May Day, the government called on workers not to give support to the students but to rally round the party and help to maintain order. Four days later even bigger student marches took place.

The Chinese leadership was very concerned about the student demands for greater reform, especially because President Gorbachev was expected to arrive in Beijing later in May for an historic state visit. This would be the first visit by a Soviet leader since 1961, when relations between China and the Soviet Union broke down.

Now hear this!

May Day rallies have been used by some government leaders to make important announcements of various kinds to the workers.

For example, in Pakistan, after eleven years of military dictatorship, the government is now under the leadership of civilian politician Benazir Bhutto. At a May Day march through the capital, Islamabad, Ms Bhutto announced that the government was legalising trade unions for the first time since the military takeover in 1977. Ms Bhutto also promised that her government would end forced labour, review the minimum wage level, and allow state employees full union rights.

Addressing workers at a May Day rally in Harare, Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe announced that workers and employers could negotiate wage increases and that this year these would not be fixed by the government. The agreements would have to be within the limits of the government's guidelines, and would depend on the profits made by the company. The government would still continue to determine the minimum wage for

low-paid groups like domestic workers (R150 a month).

In **Chile**, the military president Augusto Pinochet, responsible for ousting Salvador Allende in 1973, also used 1 May to announce a rise in the minimum wage. The rise of R26 brings the minimum wage to R188 per month, far short of the R305 which Chile's unions have been demanding.

Struggles in leading capitalist countries

May Day is a day when workers in the industrially advanced capitalist countries also have a chance to express their grievances and demands. This year was no different.

The biggest demonstrations took place in **Japan** where 1,1 million workers protested against corruption in the Japanese government. Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita was amongst top government officials involved in a shares scandal, which forced him to resign.

In **Spain**, members of the socialist and communist parties joined together for the first time in seven years. They marched through the streets of Madrid presenting a common front against the government.

There were peaceful rallies throughout **West Germany** where over 600,000 workers turned out at trade union rallies on May Day. It was only in West Berlin that violence occurred. Police used water cannon, tear

gas and truncheons against 2,000 protesters involved in looting and fire-bombing of motor cars.

The message of May Day

This survey of May Day celebrations around the world can only give readers a brief glimpse into the struggles going on in different countries. We would need much more time and study to understand all these struggles. But we can draw at least some conclusions about the events of May Day in 1989.

May Day was the opportunity for many workers to express demands and aspirations for a better world. In many countries there is still the need for freedom from repression and for the right to a democratic say in running the government. Workers are also calling for a living wage and the right to a better standard of living.

May Day was a chance for workers to understand their own struggles better, and to build solidarity with workers all over the world. For example, in this country we used May Day in 1989 to clarify our own demands on the Labour Relations Act and to develop solidarity with the struggling workers of Namibia.

Finally, in many places May Day was a day for celebrating advances and gains workers had won through struggle. It also helped workers to come together to build unity to ensure future successes and victories. ☆

MAY DAY IS OURS!

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With the increase in staff and activity in the Labour Bulletin offices, we no longer have the space to keep a large number of backcopies. So we are offering special rates on all editions from Volume 10 Number 8, up to and including Volume 13 Number 1. There's an extra-special rate on a package of backcopies for people who open new subscriptions. You will find a complete list of the various prices below.

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Letters to the Bulletin

Reply to Moll on teacher unity

Comrade Editor, I note with sadness the contents of the essay by Ian Moll in the SA Labour Bulletin concerning the unity of the teacher fraternity in South Africa. We teachers in Soweto have no part of this unity, and there is no organisation of teachers to help us in the volcanic situation which is boiling in a number of schools throughout our township.

Firstly it must be noted that the so-called progressive teacher unions do not represent Soweto teachers in the unity talks. The former NEUSA, and even now PROTECO fail to meet the needs of the mass of our teachers. I myself was a member of the NEUSA Soweto branch at the launch of that organisation, but the Executive which was elected failed to come to our schools and organise us ever since then.

Secondly, it must be noted ATASA does not have a presence in the schools. Many of our fellow teachers have monies deducted monthly to fill the coffers of ATASA, but there are no organizers or pamphlets from ATASA in our schools to help with the crisis. Especially in the primary schools, most of our teachers have monies deducted but have never even seen a TUATA or ATASA constitu-

tion.

Ian Moll must not be confused by the ATASA rhetoric. Take note of the argument used by Peteni at the ATASA conference in January 1985 when for the first time the theme of the conference was "Crisis in Black Education" rather than music competitions. Mr Peteni's message to teachers was not to antagonise or confront pupils, i.e. to play safe. If one takes him literally, he was advocating that teachers should not join students, as it is precisely teachers passivity that has angered and provoked students on a number of occasions. Any kind of militant action he ruled out. At the TUATA conference, president Tau nyane said that there is little that TUATA can do, but "to continue calling on the government to form one education ministry". We know where that has got them! Top places in the education bureaucracy, but little change in education. All that so-called ATASA leaders can do is to become principals and inspectors who check that we ordinary teachers do not organise our colleagues and conscientise the students. Teachers in the grass-roots can expect nothing from official teacher organisations except radical rhetoric, lack of action, and feathering their own nests. ATASA has no mandate from the mass of teachers to participate in the teacher unity talks.

I hereby appeal to COSATU to organise teachers directly in a trade union. Do not be fooled by the so-called teacher organisations which have no mandate. Only by proper accountability and mandates under the banner of COSATU can teacher unions win the struggle of teachers in our schools.....**Secondary School Teacher, Johannesburg Region, D.E.T.**

More on teachers

Sir, I wish to congratulate you on the recent issue of your journal, particularly its concern with issues of unity in the labour movement. I must, however, take issue with the manner in which the activities of UTASA and its President, Mr Franklin Sonn, are portrayed (see "Towards on South African teachers' union, vol.14 no.1, April 1989). Throughout his term of office as president of UTASA, Mr Sonn has been very consistent in his opposition to apartheid education. The record will show that when he went into the De Lange Commission of Inquiry, he did so in order to bring an end to segregated schooling and all other aspects of apartheid education. His opposition to the apartheid government at the time, along with that of

people like Dr Ken Hartshorne, is well documented. UTASA and the CTPA, too, have been consistent in their anti-apartheid stance. One has only to look at their conference resolutions of the 1981-82 period to see that they have shared all the goals of the "mass democratic movement" throughout the eighties. I suggest that it is not so much that UTASA has had its politics changed by "mass struggles", but rather that it has always acted progressively in recent times and fully represented the mass of its members, and that this fact has now been recognised by other opponents of apartheid education. It is not Mr Sonn who has been inconsistent, but rather the "mass democratic movement". Fortunately for teacher unity, their inconsistency has been for the better!.....**For Consistency and Unity, Mitchells Plain**

Contributor

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Economic Notes

Economic Notes is written by Labour Research Services (LRS), Cape Town

Company Profile: Highveld Steel

Highveld Steel is the largest private sector steel producer in South Africa, second in size only to state owned Iscor, which the government is planning to privatise.

1988 proved to be an "outstanding year in Highveld's affairs, with the group exceeding for the first time one billion rand in turnover and one million tons of steel production" reported the chairman of Highveld Steel. He said that "every division performed well with record profitability all round".

And how right the chairman is! Profits rose from R74 million in 1987 to R225 million in 1988. The government's share of this in the form of tax amounted to R103 million, even more than the total profit in 1987.

The large rise in profits and the 38% increase in sales is due to a sub-



stantial rise in workers' productivity.

Productivity as measured by sales per worker rose from R117,000 to R164,000 per worker - or 40%. And productivity as measured by profit per worker rose from R10,400 to R31,000 - an increase of 204%

But, workers were not rewarded for this very high increase in productivity. Labourers working for Highveld Steel were granted an increase of 16,5% in July 1988. This amounts to an increase of R1,006 for the year. Now compare this to the increase in the profit produced per worker of R20,800 in one year!

The bosses say that they can only grant productivity related wage increases. It is quite clear that at Highveld Steel workers' productivity has improved. Yet wages have shown only a small increase.

Are the bosses' calls for productivity related wage increases just another big lie? ☆

Inflation

**Consumer Price
Index
(1985=100)**

**Annual rate
of inflation
(% increase
over 1 year)**

Area	March 1989	Mar 88 - Mar 89
Cape Town	170.8	13.4%
Port Elizabeth	173.9	14.3%
East London	166.7	13.5%
Durban	162.0	13.0%
Pietermaritzburg	167.1	13.9%
Witwatersrand	171.8	14.0%
Vaal Triangle	168.3	13.0%
Pretoria	180.1	15.2%
Klerksdorp	179.7	13.9%
Bloemfontein	157.9	12.0%
OFS Goldfields	170.9	11.7%
Kimberley	165.2	12.1%
South Africa	170.9	13.8%

Source: Central Statistical Services

Inflation

**Consumer Price
Index
(1985=100)**

**Annual rate
of inflation
(% increase
over 1 year)**

Area	April 1989	Apr 88 - Apr 89
Cape Town	172.9	14.0%
Port Elizabeth	177.1	15.4%
East London	168.6	13.7%
Durban	164.5	13.4%
Pietermaritzburg	169.8	14.0%
Witwatersrand	173.9	13.7%
Vaal Triangle	170.5	13.5%
Pretoria	182.6	15.8%
Klerksdorp	182.4	14.0%
Bloemfontein	159.9	12.4%
OFS Goldfields	174.3	12.7%
Kimberley	167.2	12.4%
South Africa	173.1	14.0%

Source: Central Statistical Services

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1 Constructive criticism of unions or federations is welcome. However, articles with unwarranted attacks or of a sectarian nature which have a divisive effect on the labour movement will not be published.

2 Contributions to the Bulletin must not exceed the following lengths:

- *analytical articles* 8000 words
- *debate, reviews, documents, reports* 5000 words
- *briefings* 1000 words

3 *Articles* should be submitted in a final and correct form and in duplicate. Some articles may be refereed where necessary; all articles may be edited by the Bulletin. In the event of the editors deciding that other than minor editing changes are required, the article will be referred back to the author.

4 *Briefings* should cover topical events and developments of concern

to the democratic labour movement. They should be easy to understand and keep footnotes and references to a minimum.

5 *Debate, reviews, reports and documents* are intended:

- to make important statements and information from the labour movement more widely available;
- for reviewing new literature or other material of relevance to labour;
- to make more in-depth reports and research available to readers;
- to allow for debate on important contemporary issues.

6 Contributions should be written in clear, understandable language.

7 Contributions to the Bulletin must be typed and, where applicable, include proper footnoting and references.

8 Except in the case of public documents, all material submitted will be treated in confidence.

9 The editors reserve the right to recommend to the author of any material that it be placed under another category to that under which it was submitted.

**For more details, please
contact the editor.**



A call for unity amongst workers - part of a NUMSA banner at their recent congress

Photo: Labour Bulletin