

Mystery fire destroys union offices

FOSATU unions on the East Rand are undaunted by the mysterious fires which destroyed two of their offices on July 16.

Chris Dlamini, FOSATU's Transvaal regional Chairman, said afterwards those responsible for the fire did not know how these unions work. "The union is in the factory, not the office. If people want to destroy the union, then the office is the wrong place to start a fire," he said.

Benoni police are investigating arson.

The Fire Department said they were called out to the fire at 3.30 am. The fire destroyed records belonging to FOSATU affiliates on the East Rand.

RECORD CARD

Worst hit was the METAL AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION (MAWU) whose files, minutes and record cards were destroyed. Furniture worth about R5 000 was burnt, and damage to

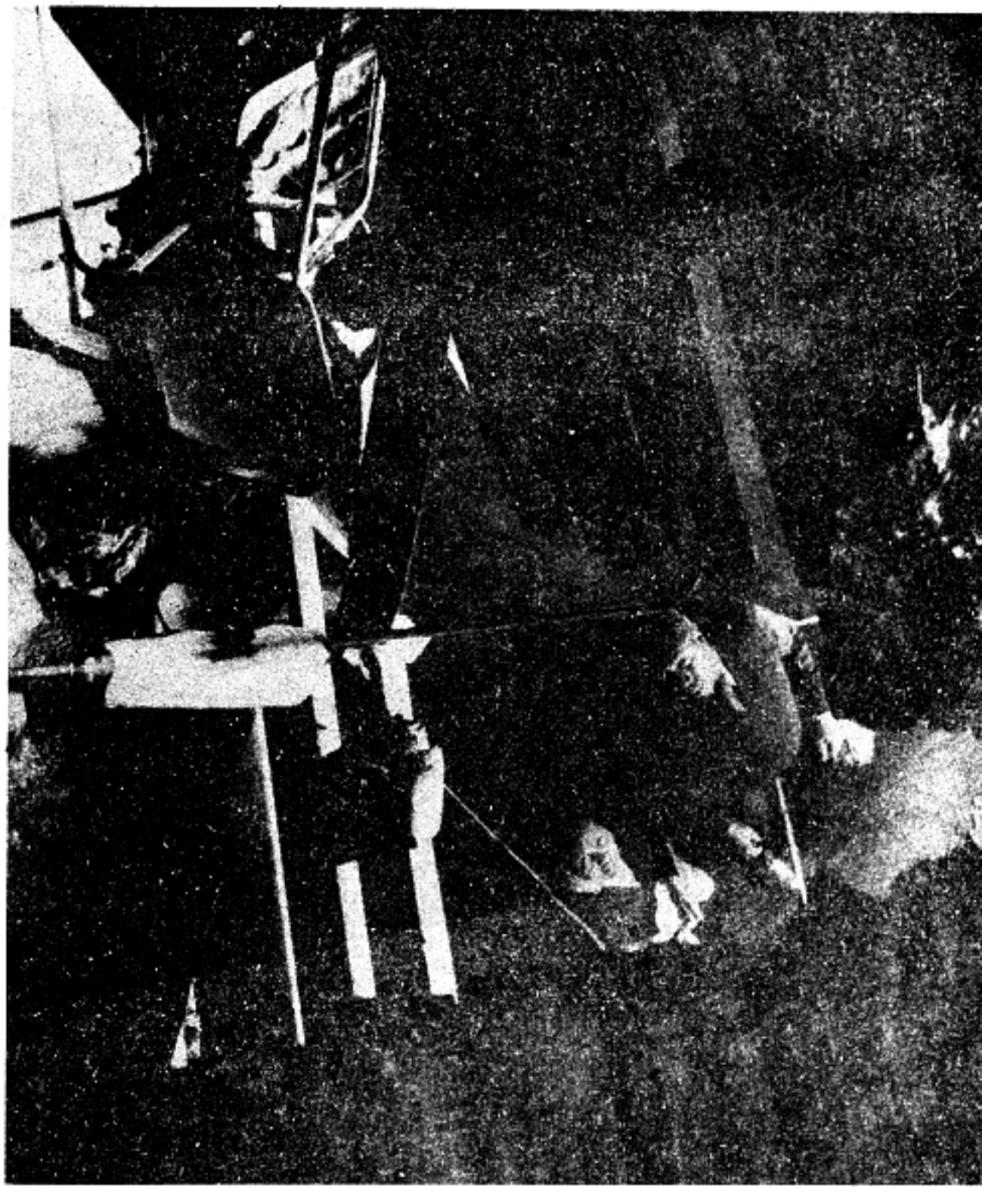
the building was estimated at about R20 000. The floor of one office was entirely destroyed.

First FOSATU official on the scene was Transvaal Regional Secretary Taffy Adler. He was confronted by the smell of burnt furniture and petrol.

On investigation, it became clear that petrol had been splashed through all the FOSATU offices. "It was sheer luck that the other offices did not go up in the fire," he said.

CONDEMNED

An official FOSATU statement condemned those responsible for the fire. "It seems strange that the fire occurred at a time of increased worker activity and militancy on the East Rand. It also seems strange that the office that was most badly damaged was that used by MAWU, whose members have been involved in massive strike action in recent weeks, with almost 4000 workers at Salcast and Hendler and Hendler having struck for higher wages," The statement said.



Workers look up at the damage caused by the fire, which burned through the office floor but the unions are undaunted.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS NEW THRUST IN FOSATU AGREEMENTS

TWO NEW agreements signed by FOSATU unions give special recognition to the rights of women. In Springs, the Sweet, Food and Allied Workers' Union (SFAWU) negotiated a new deal on maternity leave for the women working at Kellogs.

DURBAN

In Durban, an arbitration settlement between the National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW) and SA Fabrics ensures that differences between the wages of male and female workers will disappear by 1982.

MATERNITY RIGHTS

Women at Kellogs had no maternity rights before the signing of the agreement in June this year. The agreement now stipulates that pregnant women get:

- .A lump sum payment equal to 33% of her wages for a period of 12 weeks, and
- First chance at any vacancy which occurs once she is ready to return to work.

PAYMENT

The general secretary of Sister Maggie Magubane, who negotiated the Kellog's agreement, explained that the lump sum payment was only 33% of the normal wage because the women could also claim maternity benefits from UIF.

AGREEMENT

"Under this agreement, a woman will now get almost 90% of her wages whereas before she got only 45%" she said.

BENEFITS

She added that SFAWU will attempt to improve these benefits at the next negotiations in December.

In Durban, NUTW struck a blow for equality.

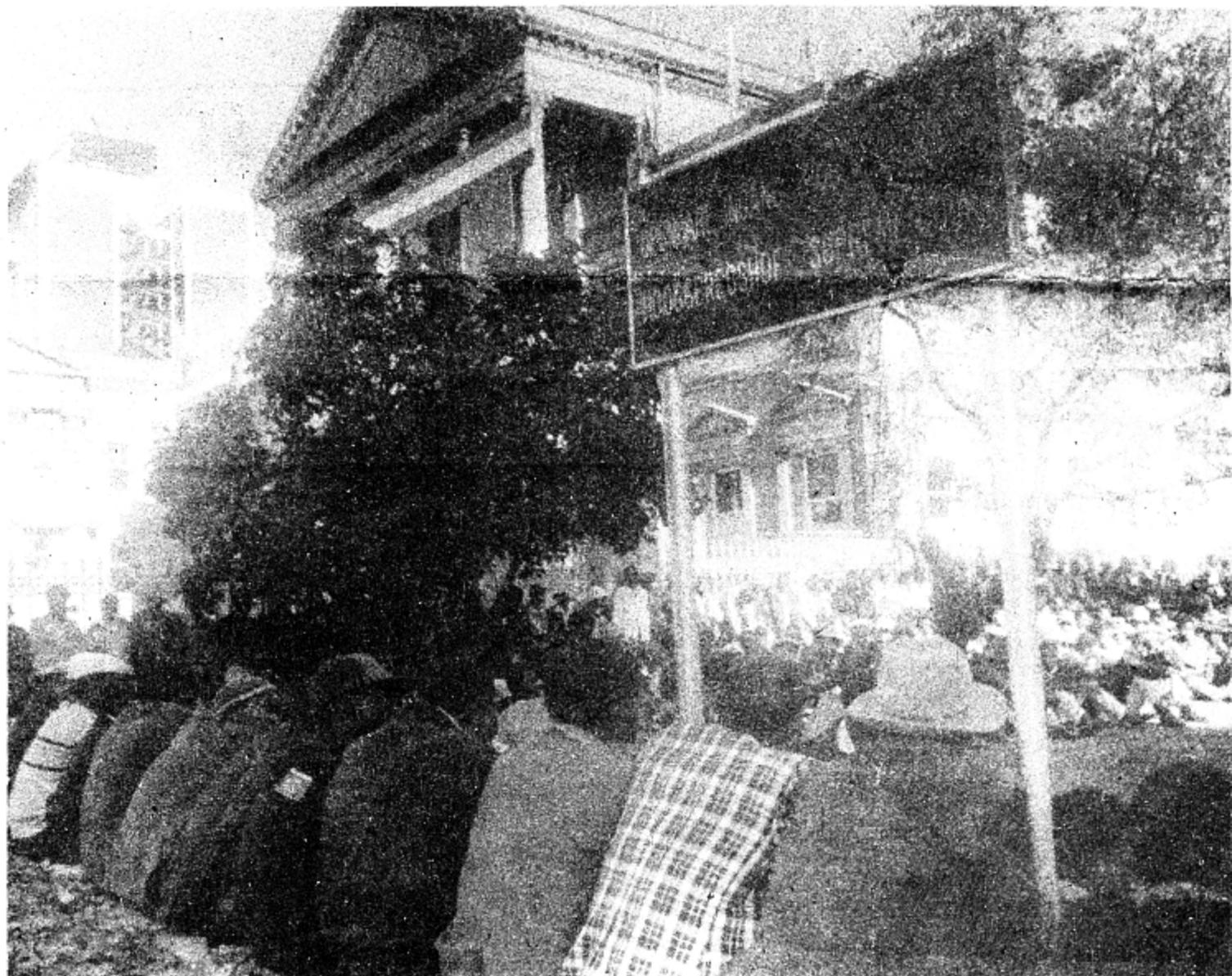
The textile industry is a notoriously badly paid industry and women have been exploited for years by being paid even less than the men.

The arbitration agreement gives an increase of 15% to all workers

and states that wages must be equalised by 1982. This will be achieved in three stages

VICTORY

As a NUTW spokesman put it, 'this was a real victory for the women



FOSATU won an important legal victory in Pietermaritzburg recently when a judge ruled that Union Co-op in Dalton had to give back the accommodation of one of the SFAWU members who was forcibly evicted after a strike. Here workers are waiting outside the Supreme Court for the verdict. Judgement about the rest of the workers will be given later.