

FOSATU calls on workers worldwide to unite and fight oppression

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

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

- * to build effective worker organisation to counter and reduce the power of the giant multinational companies.

- * to support worker struggles in other countries in whatever way we can.

- * to ensure that the institutions of the international trade union movement are not being used by anti-worker forces to create divisions and a loss of independence within the South African worker movement.

- * to assist in increasing the international condemnation of and pressure on the present racist regime in South Africa.

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

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

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

'FOSATU is definitely oppos-

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

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

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

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

Gain credibility

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the policy says.

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

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

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

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

'We mean business'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'The workers were incensed at the offer which amounted to only 4.3 percent in a year when inflation is rapidly rising,' she said.

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

Thousands of coal miners strike for the right to work

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

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

Major battle

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

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

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

Violent clashes

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

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

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

country's steel mills.

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

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

coke to a nearby steel mill.

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

Unbelievable brutality

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

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

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

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

35-hour strike

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

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

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

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



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