

SEVEN UNIONS TAKE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS NEW FEDERATION

MACWUSA SLAMMED

THE FOSATU Central Committee has slammed the Port Elizabeth based Motor Assembly and Component Workers Union of SA for spreading confusion through its statements issued after the Cape Town Unity meeting.

MACWUSA and its sister union, the General Workers Union of SA, left the unity meeting a day early and at that stage no commitment had been made by the unions to forming a new federation. In spite of this MACWUSA and GWUSA told members at their congress that a new federation would be formed of unregistered trade unions.

At no stage during the unity summit was it suggested that the federation would be limited to unregistered trade unions and among those which indicated a commitment to the new federation are both unregistered and registered trade unions.

To add to the confusion, on the last day of the unity summit, Donsie Kumalo said he represented MACWUSA and GWUSA and indicated that the two unions could not commit themselves to a federation as they did not have a worker mandate. However, now MACWUSA claims that it had suspended Kumalo.

FOSATU's Central Committee condemned MACWUSA for the confusion and misinformation caused by its statement and said 'such activities did not benefit workers and would do nothing to build unity'.

Chairman of the Eastern Province Region, John Gomomo said the statement was counter productive to the initiative taken at the summit meeting.

THE first steps towards uniting the progressive trade union movement were taken at a unity summit in Cape Town when seven union groupings committed themselves to the formation of a new federation.

For over two years FOSATU has been pushing for the formation of a wider unity among the unions which share common policies but previous summits have been disrupted by certain unions.

Attempts were made again in

Cape Town to disrupt the meeting but these were pushed aside by worker delegates who reminded the meeting that while they were arguing workers on the shop floor were suffering.

At the end of the difficult meeting Food and Canning Workers Union, the African Food and Canning Workers Union, the Cape Town Municipal Workers Association, the General Workers Union, the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union, FOSATU, the

South African Allied Workers Union and the General and Allied Workers Union committed themselves to the formation of a new federation.

Other unions present at the meeting said they did not have a mandate from their membership to commit themselves to a new federation. Whether these unions will join later remains to be seen, but it is clear that some unions are firmly committed to the federation and with FOSATU see no reason for

delay.

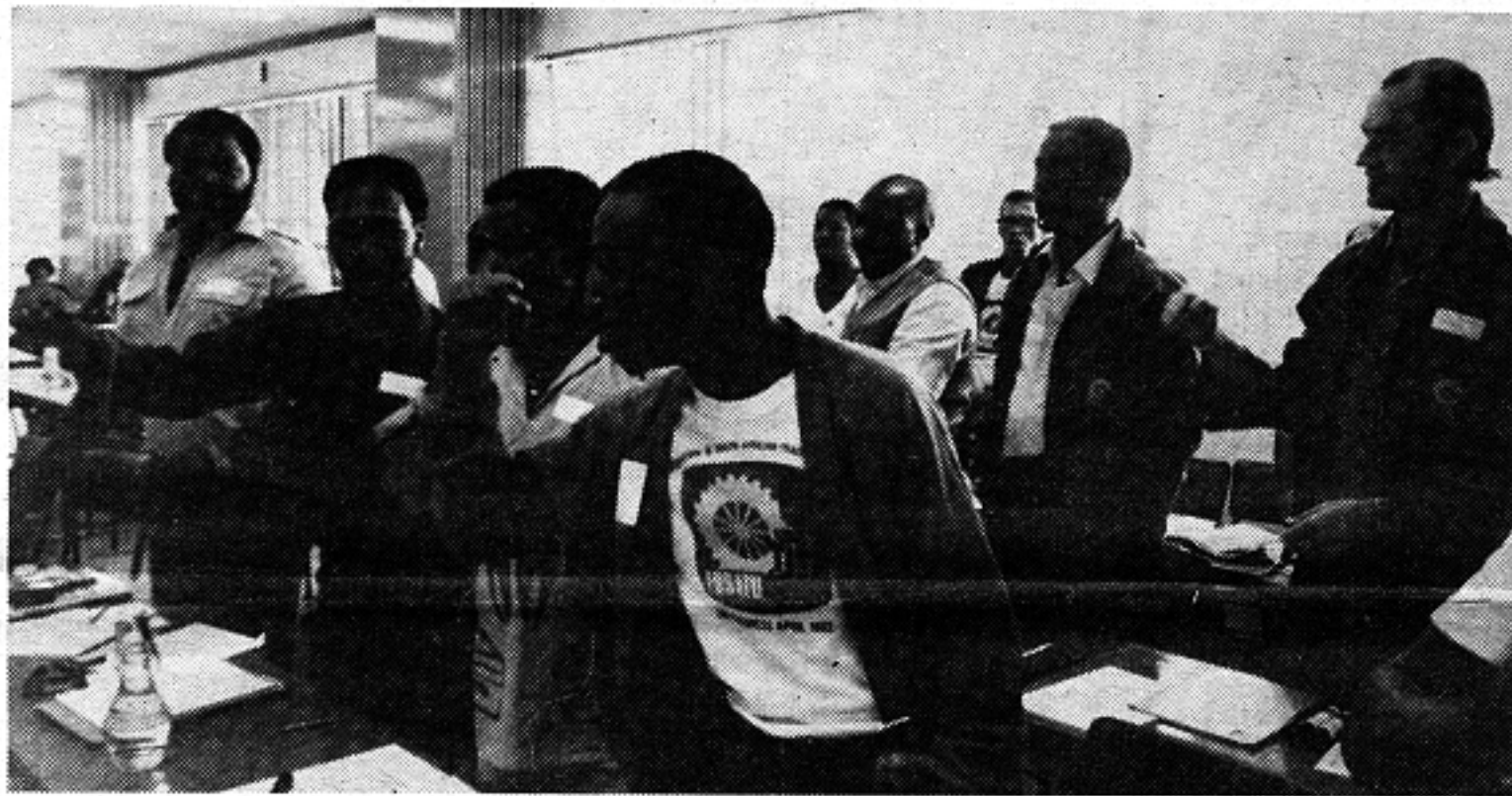
A feasibility committee will now be set up consisting of five members from the different union groupings to discuss the constitution and structure of the new federation. The committee will report back to their worker membership and a further summit meeting will be called some time later this year.

The FOSATU Central Committee meeting at Wilgespruit on April 16 and 17 said it welcomed the commitment of the seven unions 'who were prepared to act in the interests of workers'.

The Central Committee said FOSATU had always believed that moves towards a wider federation based on common policies was crucial to the worker movement in South Africa.

The Committee elected FOSATU's president, Chris Dlamini, vice president, Andrew Zulu, the general secretary, Joe Foster, the general secretary of the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union, Fred Sauls and FOSATU's national education secretary, Alec Erwin as the five FOSATU representatives to the feasibility committee.

The Central Committee said it believed that there was sufficient common ground to lead to constructive and fruitful discussions and it hoped that good progress would be made towards a wider federation.



FOSATU's president, Chris Dlamini, leads the federation's delegation in singing worker songs.

FRAME STRUGGLE FLARES UP

THE bitter ten year struggle between the giant Frame group and the National Union of Textile Workers has reached a new climax.

Ever since the formation of the NUTW in 1973 it has battled against Frame in a bid to represent union members at the various mills. This has resulted in many historic strikes as militant workers struggled against a stubborn management.

In a renewed campaign conducted over the past year, the NUTW signed on more than half of the workers at the giant Frametex Mill in the face of militant sweetheart unionism.

Frame has continually avoided acknowledging majority unionism in the factory and has refused to hold a ballot in the mill.

Workers have over the past few weeks laid their jobs on the line by continuing to wear union 'T' shirts in the mill.

However, in order to put a brake on the oppressive tactics being used by Frame, the NUTW has taken court action against the company.

In affidavits in support of the case, workers say that Frame has allowed the TUCSA affiliated Textile Workers Industrial Union to recruit members on the company premises while making it an offense leading to instant dismissal for workers who recruit for the NUTW.

They also say that the company's labour office forced wor-

kers to sign TWIU joining forms and that in many departments workers were threatened with instant dismissal if they did not join the 'red card' union.

In the court papers, NUTW says it handed 2 429 stop order forms in to the company - which is two-thirds of the workers employed at Frametex - but the company has refused to recognise NUTW and claims that TWIU has majority support.

Since bringing the case against the company, union organisers have reported that the company security officer has been interrogating union witnesses about their affidavits.

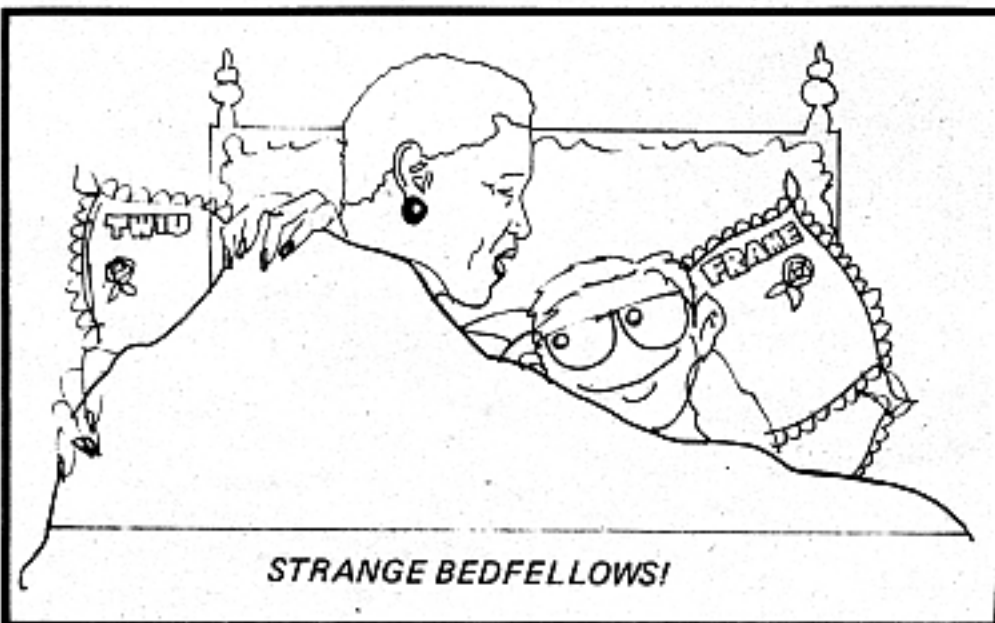
NUTW's general secretary, John Copelyn said the Frame Group for almost ten years had

blocked workers from unionising at their mills.

'Now when it is totally unavoidable to recognise a union, it is hardly a surprise to find them trying to force workers into a TUCSA union which relies on management support', he said.

'This time however, workers are not going to tolerate the unfair pressures of the company. If they want to play it the hard way our members are fully prepared for them', Brother Copelyn said.

The NUTW is demanding the court restrain Frame from recognising TWIU at Frametex and is asking it order a secret ballot be conducted in order to have the union supported by the majority of the workers recognised.



STRANGE BEDFELLOWS!

TWO YEAR RECOGNITION BATTLE WON

THE Transport and General Workers Union has finally won its two year recognition struggle with PUTCO with the signing of an agreement which will give it immediate recognition at the depots where the union has 50 per cent membership.

The agreement which covers annual negotiation of wages and working conditions, grievance, disciplinary, retrenchment and dispute procedures is the union's first agreement in the Transvaal.

TGWU general secretary, Jane Barrett said there had been tough resistance from Transvaal employers who preferred to deal with their own in-company unions or unions belonging to

TUCSA rather than recognising the TGWU.

She said she hoped the signing of the agreement with PUTCO would break down the resistance of other employers.

Up to now TGWU has been operating under a preliminary agreement with PUTCO. The signing of the agreement will now allow TGWU to take part in the company's annual wage negotiations due to take part in May.

Sister Barrett said the union was negotiating three other recognition agreements but was meeting with 'incredible intransigence' from the transport industry and municipalities.

NON-RACIALISM IN PRACTICE

PUTTING FOSATU's policy of non-racialism into practice, shop stewards at Kelloggs in Springs have been negotiating on behalf of the company's white artisans.

After seeing the successes of the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union's shop stewards committee at Kelloggs, a white artisan approached the committee when he was dismissed for overstaying his leave by two days.

Shop steward chairman and FOSATU's president, Chris

Dlamini said management had first been reluctant to listen to the union but in the end it agreed to discuss the dismissal with the shop stewards.

The outcome of the talks was that the artisan was reinstated and the company agreed to pay him for all the days he had been out of work, Brother Dlamini said.

Since then, he said 95 per cent of the white artisans in the company had joined the union and more were expected to join.