



# FOSATU WORKERS NEWS

## LEATHER WORKERS VICTORY

The two year old "clean up" struggle of Leather workers in Pietermaritzburg reached a new peak as the overwhelming majority of more than a thousand workers voted against the Benefit Fund Committee that had been nominated by supporters of the National Union of Leather Workers (NULW). The ballot took place on Saturday 29th November at the Royal showgrounds following a court settlement in a case brought by the elected "clean up committee" against the TUCSA affiliated NULW and its branch secretary Mr. Puckree Gooriah.

Workers packed into the showground meeting chaired by Mr. Brian Law, a senior Natal advocate had to after pass a credentials committee consisting of the legal representatives of both sides.

The meeting burst forth jubilantly after waiting nearly two hours for the ballot papers to be counted and it was finally announced that the FOSATU supported "clean up" committee had romped home in a landslide

victory.

The announcement was a new step in a two year struggle to have several alleged irregularities in the fund investigated by workers after alarming allegations of maladministration and corruption were brought to light. One of the most important elements of the open struggle which developed was the irregularity of two changes made to the fund's constitution. The fund was established by leather workers in Pieter-

maritzburg in 1960 and was entirely non-racial until 1976 when the constitution was quietly changed by the TUCSA union benefit fund committee to exclude African workers. A further irregularity (now conceded) came in March this year when that union tried to usurp control of the fund by changing the constitution again. A certificate was put up to the Registrar in both cases stating the amendments were done in accordance with the rules

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"Clean up" committee men before court settlement

## THE I.C. ACT 1981 RECIPE FOR CHAOS

FOSATU has strongly rejected many of the proposed changes in the Industrial Conciliation Act because they will place our union in a much worse position than before October 1979.

This government is continuously making the same mistake, they always want the largest possible hammer to crack even the smallest nut. The result is always the same - that the good gets destroyed by the bad and we have chaos and confrontation.

The good is proposals to allow unions to decide on the race of their membership and to allow all workers to join registered trade unions. But as always the government is afraid that this will allow workers to become too powerful. Up until now the law and the protection it gave everyone against unconstitutional illegal actions was good enough for the old registered unions but now it is not good enough for the new unions. They will not be allowed to organise as freely as before.

The struggle for the right to organise all workers irrespective of race has been a very long one in South Africa. We in FOSATU are not prepared to accept that we must now go backwards and not forwards.

If the government makes all the proposed changes then we will end up with a second class trade union movement in the same way as

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Pension schemes affect workers so that their opinions are the most important, not those of the insurance companies and the employers.

## PENSION - WORKERS MUST BE ALLOWED TO SPEAK

The Government Commission of Enquiry into pensions has brought out its first report two years after its appointment.

If the Commission's recommendations are carried out it will affect all workers on pension schemes and already news of the recommendations is causing uncertainty and ill feeling amongst workers.

The Commission recommendations centre around two basic changes:

- worker and employer contributions to the pension funds should be kept for the benefit of the worker even if he is fired, retrenched or resigns before retirement age.
- the money should be saved until the worker reaches retirement age unless the worker dies or is disabled.

Taken by itself this seems

to be an improvement, but many workers are very anxious about the fact that they may not be able to get their pension money back if they leave their present job for any reason.

Are workers being short sighted? Clearly the answer is no.

The major problem is that workers wages are too low to really allow a pension scheme to be effective. How many workers get more than R20,00 per month after a lifetime at work? Clearly it makes sense for a worker to prefer savings at present rather than wait for a low pension much later.

If we are going to have a fair and useful pension scheme then some important changes must take place in our society:

- wages will have to be much higher so that a worker can afford to save for his pension

- the insurance companies must be cut out so that workers don't have to pay for profits also
- the State should make a greater contribution to pensions
- employers should accept that they are better able to contribute to a workers pension scheme so that the present equal contribution system should change with the employer making a larger contribution.

These things won't happen tomorrow and we already have a problem. There have been strikes over the pension recommendations and there may well be more.

The Government should make it absolutely clear that these recommendations will not be carried out until there has been time to study them and time for workers to give their views and recommendations.