

FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



FEBRUARY 1983

FOSATU SLAMS LABOUR PARTY

Sell Out By Opportunist Leaders

Call For United Stand

THE FOSATU Executive has called for a united stand by workers against the Government's growing propaganda campaign for its so called plan for reform.

At a meeting on January 29 at Wilgespruit, representatives of all five of FOSATU's regions reported strong membership hostility to the recent decision by the Labour Party to participate in the toothless three-chamber parliament.

The Executive endorsed the FOSATU statement condemning the Labour party and discussed plans for mobilising members against the 'false and meaningless' constitutional changes proposed by the Government.

These plans have been submitted to affiliated unions which will submit reports to the Central Committee — FOSATU's top decision making body — so that further steps can be taken.

FOSATU will also seek co-operation from other progressive unions in the forthcoming unity meeting in order to form a united front on this issue.

It was felt by members of the Executive that a major problem had been the lack of unity amongst community and political organisations.

Guidelines were issued to all the regions urging them to support united and progressive campaigns against the Government's attempts to win support for its racially divisive policies.

However, it was agreed that FOSATU would not get involved in petty division.

It was clear from the mood of the meeting that the Labour Party's sell-out has roused FOSATU's anger.

FOSATU's general secretary, Joe Foster said 'Many of us have seen this coming for a long time. Last year Labour Party leader, Rev. Allan Hendrickse showed the party's true colours when he attacked motor workers in the Eastern Cape for striking for a living wage. Now they are abandoning the principles of unity which we in FOSATU will never abandon. We are fighting for economic and political justice for all irrespective of race. We can have nothing to do with racially divided puppet parliaments.'



FOSATU Executive at Wilgespruit: Back left — J. Mthinyane (N Natal); J. Dampies (W Province); J. Ntuli (Transvaal); A. Zulu (Vice President); J. Foster (General Secretary); C. Dlamini (President); A. Erwin (Education Secretary); F. Sauls (E Province); J. Gommomo (E Province); Middle left: T. McKenna (W Province); A. Wilson (W Province); T. Dladla (N Natal); N. Buthelezi (N Natal); R. Mofokeng (Transvaal); J. Mkalipi (E Province); N. Gantana (Treasurer); Front: E. Mabaso (Natal); J. Mawbey (Natal).

Labour Party's 'Dangerous Game'

Since it started the Labour Party has played a dangerous game of racial politics. Against the wishes of the majority of people it decided to enter the Coloured Representative Council (CRC). It managed to confuse many by saying that it was only going in so as to destroy the CRC. However, once it was in the Labour Party stayed there and accepted the government label of Coloured.

Only when it became clear that even the government wanted to change the CRC did they lamely withdraw. However, having tasted false power they made their next move against the wishes of the majority. They participated in the Coloured Local Management Committees which were the government's poor substitute for removing so-called coloured people from the municipal councils. They even held talks with government about these Manage-

ment Committees. Desperately they looked for ways to appear politically powerful even though they were collapsing on the ground.

They next joined Inkatha and the Indian Reform Party in a so-called South African Black Alliance. No one was ever clear what this Alliance did and clearly the Labour Party could find no political direction.

So finally seeking an easy road they have now betrayed their partners in the Alliance and more than 80% of South Africa's population and sided with the Nationalist Government.

What is the great system that they say offers hope for all in South Africa?

* It is a so-called parliament with three separate racial chambers or sections. So it is nothing other than the old apartheid CRC, SAIC and

Cape Town Parliament dressed in new clothes.

* The whites, "coloureds" and Indians will only sit together in the so-called Presents Council. This has 35 elected members and 25 government appointed members. Of the 35 elected members 20 are white, 10 so-called coloured and 5 Indian.

* The President will certainly be white and no doubt a member of the present National Party. The President will have powers that will be envied by many of the world's dictators.

So Labour Party hopes to negotiate for a non-racial South Africa are little more than a joke. However, there is no doubt they will be able to negotiate a big fat salary for sitting in the Presidents Council.

As a worker was heard to say "They talk about a Parliament with 3 chambers — they must mean the kind that my grandmother keeps under her bed."

FOSATU has strongly condemned the Labour Party's decision to participate in the Government's farcical constitutional reform.

In a statement released shortly after the Labour Party decided to participate in the so called constitutional reforms put forward by the Government at the party's Eshowe Congress, FOSATU said the Labour Party had now paraded their political opportunism for all to see.

'The Labour Party had shown its true colours to workers last year when it sided with employers and attacked workers and their unions while they were striking for a living wage in the Eastern Cape,' the statement said.

It added that this latest decision finally confirms the Labour Party's political irrelevance for workers.

The decision can only be seen as a desperate attempt by an unrepresentative leadership to prolong their own personal careers.

To do this the Labour Party has been prepared to sacrifice unity in the struggle and have finally bowed down to racist political divisions by abandoning 80 percent of South Africa's population, the statement said.

FOSATU said the Labour Party had embraced the label of so called coloured and were prepared to sit around the negotiating table in the hope that a few coloured crumbs will pass their way.

'By doing this they have sided with the very forces of apartheid that continue to oppress and exploit workers,' the statement said.

FOSATU and its members, which have been at the forefront of the non-racial struggle in this country, totally reject this shortsighted opportunism.

FOSATU has shown that only through complete unity will oppressed workers achieve a fair share of the misdirected wealth of South Africa.

Clearly the coloured Labour Party cannot give workers assistance in their struggle for economic and political justice in South Africa whereas FOSATU remains committed to this struggle and will never abandon it.

WORKERS FACE GUNS

ARMED white security guards confronted CWIU members at Triomf's Richards Bay plant when they attempted to discuss with the factory manager his 'first and final' wage offer of a 5 percent wage increase.

Workers were walking towards the administration block during their lunch break when they were met by a line of armed security men threatening to shoot.

'When workers want to talk management want to shoot,' one worker said.

Workers Win R38 000 In Court Victory

FIFTY-ONE workers at Stobar at Olifantsfontein through their solidarity have won a major victory in the Industrial Court which will prevent employers from unjustly firing workers.

The Stobar workers were all dismissed last year after management claimed they had been participating in a 'go-slow'. The workers denied this so their union, the Metal and Allied Workers Union, decided to take the company to the Industrial Court for unfairly dismissing their members.

The Industrial Court recently ordered the company to take back the workers and, on top of this, ordered them to pay them R38 000 in back pay for the time they had been out of work.

The Industrial Court, which was formed specially to listen to disputes in the field of labour, has up to now tended to favour management in its decisions. Perhaps it is now beginning to appreciate the oppressed position of workers in this country.

The trouble at Stobar began in August last year when management decided that the answer to the drop in orders they were experiencing was to lay off some workers.

The shop stewards initially managed to persuade management to introduce short time before retrenchment but at a later stage the company went ahead and retrenched six workers without any consultation with the shop stewards.

The shop stewards told the retrenched workers to return to work and they would take up their case for them.

However, before the issue could be discussed, management dismissed the entire workforce for participating in a 'go-slow'.

The workers told the court that they thought management had

dreamed up the idea of a go-slow in order to enable them to retrench workers without consulting with the representative union.

A MAWU organiser said the victory was a result of the solidarity of the Stobar workers. For about six months they held meetings twice a week, he said.

A MAWU spokesman said

workers must learn to consider brothers and sisters in other factories. After all the victory achieved by the Stobar workers will benefit all FOSATU members, he said.

Management will have to think twice before arbitrarily firing workers without giving them a chance to argue their case, he added.



Stobar shop stewards celebrate their victory with organisers at FOSATU's Kempton Park office.

JOINT SHOP STEWARDS COURSES

AN important move has been made in the Transvaal by the Regional Education Committee.

The Transvaal saw a large increase in membership in 1982 with recognition being gained in many factories.

Shop stewards were asking for training courses to be run as they felt they needed to learn to operate independently and effectively in the factories. There are presently 60 FOSATU shop steward groups awaiting training in the Transvaal.

As a result of this demand, the Regional Education Committee is preparing to hold joint shop stewards training courses. Shop stewards from all FOSATU unions will attend the courses and organisers from all the unions will take part in the teaching.

The two courses will be run in the last two weeks of each month for a period of three days each. The initial courses will cover issues such as grievance handling, preparing for a meeting with management, union structures and union democracy.

A large number of organisers and shop stewards will take part so the committee hopes to develop effective courses and course material which can be of use to all FOSATU unions.

Worldwide Support For Shoe Workers

THE plight of workers at the KwaZulu Shoe Company at Loskop in Natal has roused the anger of unions worldwide.

The Loskop factory is part of the giant shoe multinational, Bata, based in Canada which employs more than 85 000 workers in 100 factories all over the world.

Workers at the KwaZulu Shoe Company raised many serious grievances last year but the company refused to discuss any of these with the

National Union of Textile Workers and in fact refused to have anything to do with the union.

In the face of this situation, NUTW raised the plight of the Loskop workers both with the International Textile Garment and Leather Workers Federation and with the Canadian Labour Congress.

PLEDGE

Since then the NUTW has received pledges of support from

unions from all over the world and many have written to Mr TJ Bata - head of the Bata company - calling on him to 'eradicate' the mistreatment of the KwaZulu workers.

RAISE

The Canadian Labour Congress raised the Loskop issue with the Canadian Government and the International Secretary of the Congress strongly criticised the company in an interview on the Canadian Radio.

New Links With International Labour

JOHN Copelyn, the acting general secretary of the National Union of Textile Workers, has been appointed to the Executive Committee of the International Textile Garment and Leather Workers Federation.

The ITGLWF represents 5 million workers worldwide in the textile, garment, footwear and allied industries. Over 146 unions from 68 countries are affiliated to the international.

LINK

Brother Copelyn's appointment marks a further step in the establishment of links between FOSATU affiliates and the international labour movement.

He joins Fred Sauls, the general secretary of the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union, who is on the Executive of the International Metalworkers' Federation and FOSATU's president, Chris Dlamini who sits on the Africa Executive of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Associations.

Since establishing links with the ITGLWF, the NUTW has been reporting to the international its battles with multinationals. Two years ago ITGLWF's general secretary, Charles Ford, came to South Africa to give evidence in support of the NUTW's case against SA Fabrics and more recently he has been drumming up support for the union in its dispute with the KwaZulu Shoe Company.

PRESERVE

It is not surprising, therefore, that Brother Copelyn should be appointed to the Executive which had previously been the preserve of TUCSA unions.



John Copelyn

NEWS IN BRIEF

THE National Automobile and Allied Workers Union has won a new R2 an hour minimum wage rate at Leyland's Cape Town plant.

Senior shop steward and FOSATU treasurer, Nathaniel Gantana said 'We are by no means satisfied with the wages but the situation of the economy is making things difficult.'

For the first time the wage agreement was separated from the recognition agreement. The reason for this, Brother Gantana said, was so that if there was a dispute over wages this would not jeopardise the union's recognition by the company.

UNIPLY

PAPER Wood and Allied Workers Union has signed its first recognition agreement with a Factory in Southern Natal.

The agreement with Uniply at Cato Ridge follows a strike last June when the entire workforce downed tools in support of a dismissed colleague. The newly elected shop stewards committee negotiated his reinstatement and the union began negotiations towards an agreement.

PWAWU has two established branches in the Transvaal and Northern Natal and is working towards establishing branches in the Eastern Cape and in Southern Natal.

KELLOGGS

SINCE the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union was recognised at Kelloggs in Springs in 1979 the union has won massive wage increases for its members - in 1980 the lowest grade was only R38 a week whereas according to the latest wage agreement the same workers will be paid R90 a week.

And more important in terms of the new wage agreement workers have reached the R2 an hour

minimum.

This makes Kelloggs the only food company to pay workers the R2 minimum, Brother Chris Dlamini, vice chairman of the shop stewards committee and FOSATU president said.

MONDI

ANGLO American subsidiary, Mondri, has been forced to back down on its decision to not negotiate with the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union at factory level.

Late last year Mondri management at the company's Felixton Mill informed PWAWU that union officials could no longer be present at meetings between management and shop stewards.

However, when workers barred their shop stewards from meeting with management on these terms, Mondri backed down and negotiations have begun towards union recognition.

HENKEL

HENKEL workers long and bitter struggle for union recognition and wage negotiations reached an important landmark in January when the Chemical Workers Industrial Union negotiated a 22 percent wage increase and an improved annual bonus.

During the negotiations the canteen was boycotted on several occasions. As one worker put it 'How can we eat the company food when our children are going to stay hungry.'

CWIU Branch Secretary, Rod Crompton said 'Henkel wages are still lagging behind other major detergent producers but we believe this agreement is a start.'



EDITORIAL

Unions Mourn Aggett

THE following statement was released by the Food and Canning Workers Union to commemorate the death of Neil Aggett one year ago.

We grieve along with family, friends and colleagues at the death of our comrade. Our anger has not lessened in the year that has passed.

The events of the past year have confirmed what we know to be true. First, that the detention of Neil and other trade unionists was an attack on our union and other progressive trade unions. Once again we see that 'State Security' has been used as a smokescreen for the security police to act against trade unions.

Second, we have the evidence of the inquest of those who have been through detention and who saw Neil. Their evidence confirms for us that Neil had no reason to kill himself, but that the conditions of detention and the treatment of detainees is such that it is inevitable that there will be casualties and deaths.

As far as we are concerned there are no 'suicides' in detention, only victims. The finding of the inquest court that no-one was to blame for his death utterly offends our sense of truth and justice. We thank the detainees for their courage in coming forward to give their evidence, which will be believed by the overwhelming majority of South Africans.

It is also a matter for regret that

there have been attempts to claim Neil for this or that political purpose. In particular we distance ourselves from the award by the AFL-CIO to Neil posthumously. This award was made without consultation with the trade union movement as a whole or our union. In citation it quotes a statement made by Neil to the security police while in detention as representing Neil's views. We consider it to be a gross insult to his memory to quote from a statement made to the security police.

Neil's views are best expressed by the way he lived and worked. His integrity and dedication are still an inspiration to us. The methods of thorough organisation which he practiced, live on.

FOSATU joins with our brother in Food and Canning in mourning Neil's death. After the release of the horrific inquest verdict, FOSATU's general secretary, Joe Foster released the following statement.

FOSATU is shocked by the inquest verdict which comes in the wake of massive evidence of abuse of detainees.

The verdict will give no solace to those unfortunate enough to be taken into police custody.

We fear that until the present system of detention without trial is abolished, no enquiry or inquest after the fact will satisfy us that detention without trial and the conditions arising out of detention without trial are just.

Back From Germany



A FOSATU delegation recently returned from a two week visit to Germany where they visited major German multinationals and German trade unions. Les Kettle, NAAWU regional secretary, Charles Mkhabela MAWU representative, Abbey Cwele CWIU president and Dusty Ngwane CWIU chairman pictured here at Jan Smuts airport on their return relate some of the funnier aspects of their visit. The tour was sponsored by the FES who work with the German trade union movement.

MIGRANT LAWS USED AGAINST WORKERS

THERE is increasing evidence that the country's migrant labour laws are being used against workers in an attempt to curb union strength.

Members of the Metal and Allied Workers Union involved in a dis-

pute with Screenex found themselves confronted not only by a stubborn management but also by the might of the East Rand Administration Board.

Following discussions last year with workers at this factory near Elandsfontein in the Transvaal, management agreed to renew all migrant labour contracts. However, just before closing time they cancelled 11 call in cards.

Screenex refused to discuss the issue with workers or the union and when workers reported to work on January 3, management called in the police. Six workers were warrested and one was later charged with trespassing.

EVICTON

The company has now hired 73 migrant workers, in spite of a declared policy by ERAB that they would not register any migrant workers, and the MAWU members have been threatened with eviction from their hostels.

It appears that Government bodies are prepared to use the country's migrant labour laws against workers exercising their right to withhold their labour. Workers face not only dismissal but also loss of their accommodation.

However, Screenex workers said the factory cannot produce anything without its old workforce. Most of them have very long service and are the only ones who can set and operate the machines.

Workers have slammed the company's owners, Messrs Freissle and Rosenbusch for coming to South Africa from Germany to exploit local workers.

EXPLOIT

MAWU intends to ask all Screenex customers whether they are prepared to buy from a company which treats its workers in this way by exploiting the detested migrant labour laws. The major customers include the mines in Zimbabwe and Zambia, as well as De Beers, Anglo American Corporation and Gercor in South Africa.

Fighting Retrenchment

Retrenchment is caused by the free market system that places profit before people. But with organisation we can fight retrenchment. In FOSATU our unions are fighting for the rights set out here:

NOTICE — management must inform the union when they want to retrench workers. The more workers they want to retrench the longer the notice period must be. In Britain, for example, companies must give 90 days if 100 or more workers are affected.

INFORMATION — management must give reasons why they want to retrench — is it because of bad business, new machines, increased imports etc. We must know what steps management have taken to solve this problem. We must know how many people are affected and in what departments. We need to know the jobs done by those workers, their length of service and their ages.

NEGOTIATION — the purpose of the notice and information is to allow the union to express its views. Workers themselves may have ideas as to how to solve the problems.

ONCE the decision is taken that there will be retrenchment, then steps must still be taken to keep the number of workers affected to a minimum. Our demands are:

- No overtime worked.
- Transfers to other departments if possible.
- Early voluntary retirement.
- Lay off — workers are not dismissed but instead take an extended holiday. This is particularly important for contract workers.
- Short time to be negotiated.
- No employment of casual workers.

THEN our demands are:

THE major principle unions fight for is called LIFO — which stands for Last In First Out. This ensured that people with the longest service are retrenched last.

SEVERANCE Pay — retrenchment is not the fault of workers and it, therefore must be made expensive for the company so that it is not abused. In order to achieve this FOSATU has introduced severance pay — the usual demand is that workers get a payment on top of notice pay. This payment is linked to the years of service a worker has.

PENSIONS — if a worker is on a pension scheme then the least he must get is his contribution and the company's plus interest.

BIG groups like Barlow Rand and Anglo American must try and find jobs for retrenched workers in other companies in the group.

THE names and addresses of retrenched workers must be kept and they must be the first to be re-employed if the company takes on workers again.

LABOUR PARTY

THE worker struggle is not for those who have a faint heart. The decision of the Labour Party to accept the Government's proposals shows this clearly. The Labour Party has fallen into the trap that their kind of leadership always fall into. They want to convince workers there are easy ways to 'power' and are quick to accept handouts from a powerful Government. They say they will negotiate for everyone — including the 80 percent of the oppressed people who are not covered by these proposals. But as every worker knows from his trade union experience successful negotiation requires strength and the Labour Party has none. So the leadership are only accepting benefits for themselves and are prepared to sacrifice workers' interests to do this.

However, there will always be great pressure and propaganda for workers to follow behind these opportunists. In 1983 FOSATU will have to give political direction to workers which will make them determined to organise and fight the struggle for economic and political justice for all in South Africa.

Profile of a Worker Leader



THE FOSATU Worker News here kicks off with the first of a series of interviews with FOSATU's worker leaders. The interviews are intended to show a bit about the background of the men and women elected by the FOSATU membership and what is expected of them as office bearers. While in the Transvaal recently, FWN talked to FOSATU's VICE PRESIDENT ANDREW ZULU.

I was born in Zululand at Nqutu, about forty miles from Vryheid in Natal. My parents worked on a small holding doing ploughing that sort of thing.

Q. At what age did you start school?

I think at about the age of eleven or somewhere round there. It was a mission school.

Q. When did you leave?

I left in 1960 after my father said he couldn't afford to let me carry on. So I came up to Johannesburg through a football club. I was sort of pro at football by then, although there was no such thing as professional soccer. I was recommended to a club based in Johannesburg called the NQ Brothers.

Q. How long did you play soccer for?

From 1961 till 1973, somewhere round there. I then registered in Germiston and started working at Dorman Long. Later I moved to Stonestreet - this is my fourteenth year there. I started as a packer but then was promoted to storeman.

Q. When did you become aware of the need for a trade union?

While learning history at school I began to realise how unsatisfactory things were in this country and began to look for ways to fight

back. I heard of the Metal and Allied Workers Union in 1977. One of my co-workers pulled me aside and told me there was an organisation which could give us some protection in the factory. We both went to the union offices and one of the organisers explained to us what the union was all about and the kind of risks we would be taking by joining the union. Both of us started organising in the factory by picking on those we could trust until we had organised the majority of the workers.

Q. Was organising very difficult?

Very difficult as at that time there were no unions and people were very suspicious. Some thought the union would protect them without them having to do any work towards the union.

Q. How long did it take you to organise the factory?

It took us about two to three months. We organised about 60 out of the 80 workers at the factory - leaving out the spies. Even some of the impimpis joined us because they expected miracles. As time went on they dropped out.

Q. Were there any strikes?

Yes, we had some strikes but not major strikes as such. Our first strike followed the firing of one of our members who was very active in the union - he used to organise

during working hours. At that time there was a liaison committee but we ignored them after we had joined the union as they did not really represent the workers. I was one of the shop stewards who went straight to management to ask why they had fired this man. They threatened to fire us. We said we did not care about that we just wanted to know why this man had been fired. We suspected they had fired him because of his union activities. The following day we all gathered in the changing rooms. The director came in and demanded to know what was going on. I explained to him that we were dissatisfied with the way our brother had been handled - he should have been given a chance, or at least warned. This was the first time management had heard of the union but they agreed not to victimise union members and said they would consult with the shop stewards.

Q. Do you think management were serious about talking to union shop stewards?

They were suspicious, but they were more afraid than we were. They were not sure how to handle us, as we were the only factory in the area that had joined the union. MAWU was very small at that time they had only organised about five factories.

Q. Did you help organise other factories?

Yes, we helped pass on the spirit of unionism.

Q. Were you involved in the talks which led for the formation of FOSATU?

Yes, very much involved

Q. Were you conscious of a policy of non-racialism at that time?

As far as I am concerned I don't believe in racialism. I don't believe you have to black, red or yellow to assist in the worker struggle in South Africa. If you are doing the right thing for workers it does not matter what colour you are. Although, I must admit when I first entered unions I was suspicious of white involvement but all my experience since then has shown me that in the real worker struggle there is no place for racism.

Although, I know that the problems in South Africa are largely economic and social, the solution is political. You've got to know which line you are taking because I do not believe that the worker struggle is not a political struggle. Worker participation in FOSATU is the only thing which can guide the organisation in the right direction.

Q. Looking back did you think unions would grow to this size?

I never believed we would reach this stage so quickly. I never

dreamt workers would show so much interest in union activities because when I started people believed we would be arrested as we were involved in what they called communism. Anything you did against management was viewed as communism.

Q. Have you travelled a lot since becoming vice-president?

We travel a lot to organise workers and to attend meetings of MAWU and FOSATU. I have also been sent by FOSATU overseas. This was the first time I had been outside the borders of South Africa. I was amazed to hear people overseas talking about our country. If we can do as much as possible ourselves in the struggle, we can expect strong support from workers outside South Africa.

Q. How do you see your position as FOSATU's vice-president?

I have a duty to organise workers in the struggle and to develop worker leadership. I'm not here for the position. Workers have to learn to fight for themselves and it's not something that can be achieved next year. They have got to learn to think of the future - their children must benefit from the struggle.

There is no doubt that FOSATU will continue to grow as unlike some other unions who shout a lot, FOSATU meets its words with actions.

COUNCIL'S WAGES BETTERED

WITHIN six weeks of gaining recognition at Leyland SA's warehouse and repair shop in Elandsfontein, NAAWU negotiated a new wage deal for its members at the plant.

Wages for the lowest paid workers went from R1,71 per hour to R1,95 per hour - an increase of 14 per cent.

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While this is still far from the new minimum of R3,50 demanded by NAAWU, it represents a sizeable increase won by the new shop steward committee in their first negotiation.

ABOVE

It is also 95c per hour, or 95 percent, above the minimum negotiated in the Industrial Council under which this branch of Leyland falls - the National Industrial Council for the Motor Industry.

It is no wonder that workers changed their membership from the union which sits on the council, MICWU, to NAAWU.

Union Merger



THE Glass and Allied Workers Union has merged with the Chemical Workers Industrial Union - a move aimed at consolidating membership in these two sectors of the chemical industry.

The merger follows discussions at last year's FOSATU Congress on the need to build broad-based industrial unions.

COMMON

The union's Executives felt there were many areas in common between the two unions and it was decided that a merger would strengthen workers' bargaining

power.

GAWU's president, Ronald Mofokeng said: 'The main advantage in joining CWIU is that we will have more power to cope with the problems being presented by the recession.'

SHORTAGE

He said his union had struggled because of a shortage of funds, this would be overcome by the pooling of the two union's resources.

The new union, which will keep the name of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union, now plans to expand into the major glass producers.