

UNITY TALKS ON THE MOVE

ON July 1 and 2 representatives from South Africa's major independent unions, including FOSATU, will gather in Cape Town to discuss the formation of a new federation. The April Unity meeting also held in Cape Town set the unions on the road to forming a wider unity and now the feasibility committee (set up after this meeting) will discuss how this can be achieved. Seven unions at that stage committed themselves to the formation of a new federation and since then others have joined. FOSATU Worker News here gives a brief history of the unions which will be represented so that worker members can follow the future developments.

AFRICAN FOOD AND CANNING WORKERS UNION / FOOD AND CANNING WORKERS UNION.

The Food and Canning Workers Union was formed in the Western Cape in 1941 by Ray Alexander. From the beginning the union was committed to non-racialism and to the organisation of all the workers in the food industry. In 1947 the FCWU was forced by the government to separate into two branches – one for black workers and the other for coloureds. It was then that the African Food and Canning Workers Union was formed. The FCWU remained a registered union and the AFCWU has stayed unregistered. In 1955 it joined the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and during the crackdown on SACTU unions during the 60's, the unions became largely inactive. Only with the re-emergence of black unions during the 70's did they revive. The major membership of the Food and Canning Unions is in the Western Cape, although they now have branches in all major centres.



AN AFCWU WORKER TALKS AT THE APRIL UNITY MEETING.

THE COMMERCIAL CATERING AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION OF SA.

CCAWUSA was formed in 1975 as a black parallel to the already existing TUCSA unions for white and coloured shop workers. It never joined TUCSA and at one stage was affiliated to the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions but has since split away. Over the past two years CCAWUSA's membership has rocketed and the union has been recognised by the majority of the giant chain stores.

CAPE TOWN MUNICIPAL WORKERS ASSOCIATION.

This union was started in 1943 but was substantially re-organised by a grass roots movement in the early 1960's. The CTMWA is based in Cape Town and is registered. Since its re-organisation, the union has taken a politically progressive position and is firmly committed to non-racialism.



CTMWA GENERAL SECRETARY, JOHN ERNSTZEN ADDRESSES THE MEETING.

THE COUNCIL OF UNIONS OF SA.

After throwing out three unions which joined FOSATU (the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union, the Glass and Allied Workers Union and the Engineering and Allied Workers Union) the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions decided to form themselves into CUSA – which was set up in September 1980. CUSA has a well publicized policy of black leadership. At this stage it has 11 affiliated unions including the new National Union of Mineworkers.



THE CUSA DELEGATION TO THE APRIL MEETING

THE GENERAL WORKERS UNION.

In 1973 with the renewed interest by black workers in unions, the Western Province Workers Advice Bureau was formed in Cape Town. The Advice Bureau involved itself in the formation of works committees at factories around the Western Cape and in 1977 formed the Western Province General Workers Union. When the union expanded its organisation to the docks at Port Elizabeth and East London it dropped the Western Province from its name. The GWU's main worker base is the stevedores and it has successfully organised over 2000 stevedores in South Africa's major ports.



PART OF GWU'S WORKER DELEGATION AT THE UNITY TALKS.

THE GENERAL AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION.

Little is known about GAWU except that it was formed when the Transvaal officials of the Black Allied Workers Union (a black consciousness union formed in 1972 whose activity is now limited to around Newcastle in Natal) broke away to form their own union. GAWU's main organising base is in the Reef area.

THE MOTOR ASSEMBLERS AND COMPONENT WORKERS UNION OF SA / THE GENERAL WORKERS UNION OF SA.

After the Ford strike of December 1979 rebel members of the United Automobile and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (which later became the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union) decided to form a new union. MACWUSA was launched in September 1980 and about the same time the union decided to start a general union – GWUSA. The unions operate mainly in the Port Elizabeth area, although a branch was started by Donsie Khumalo in Pretoria (he has since broken away to form his own union).

THE SOUTH AFRICAN ALLIED WORKERS UNION.

SAAWU was started in 1978 when members of the Black Allied Workers Union broke away to form a new non-racial organisation. Unlike FOSATU which is a federation of industrial unions, SAAWU is a general union. During the 1980's the union was particularly active in the East London area, although it has branches in Natal and in the Transvaal.

