

FOSATU

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MAWU MOVES FORWARD

New Era of Mass Worker Mobilisation



A NEW era of mass mobilisation of workers has been ushered in by the Metal and Allied Workers Union's recent decision to join the giant metal industries' Industrial Council.

MAWU's massive growth during the wave of strikes in 1981 and 1982 – when Transvaal membership shot up to 30000 – has led the union to make this key change in tactics.

In a statement released shortly after MAWU's National Executive Committee made the final decision, the union said it had become clear in an assessment of these strikes that MAWU needed a focus around which the union could unite demands.

Although the strikes assumed industry-wide proportions, the united opposition of employers in the form of SEIFSA backed by the various Administration Boards prevented workers uniting in their demands.

In setting out its strategy for effective mobilisation of its new members, MAWU said it would use the council as a means to negotiate around united worker demands and to secure recognition rights at the hundreds of organised factories.

The union said it would use its experience at grass roots organisation to mobilise at different levels.

* plant – the basis of the union's strength.

* company – MAWU is building company shop steward councils.

* local – the local shop steward councils are uniting workers in each local.

* sectors – shop steward councils are being built for different sectors of the metal industry; for example iron and steel making, the foundries, motor building etc.

* national – MAWU aims to become an effective national union by dominating a large

fraction of the 1000 major factories in the industry.

On top of this, the union said it had raised many important demands, in order to win new rights for workers, which had been taken over and misused by the Industrial Council.

Also, there are unions on the Industrial Council which claim to speak for the most oppressed workers when they truly do not. MAWU and other unions with the same policies must clearly take the lead.

MAWU said it was fully aware of the traps which had destroyed any shop floor organisation of unions presently sitting on the council but, the union said, its organising strategy and its history would enable it to overcome these.

'We must never rely only on the council to solve workers' problems. We must continue to build shop floor organisation and strong shop stewards in all factories. If we leave this strategy we will have no power at all,' the union said.

MAWU added that it would always negotiate where its members interest were best served and it would have no hesitation in leaving the council if necessary.

'The present unions don't involve their members in council negotiations but merely inform them when everything is finished,' MAWU said.

'As long as our members have a clear sense of direction and we keep our organisation strong, we can continue to be a democratic union fighting for workers' rights. We must take the struggle forwards always,' MAWU concluded.

To build the first mass based union in the metal industry.
To give black workers their first real voice on the council.
To prevent the hijacking and misuse of MAWU initiated demands for worker rights.

To confront employers on all levels – factory, company, regionally and nationally.

To establish domination in key sectors of the metal industry.
To fulfill the mandate given by MAWU's grass roots membership.

BUT...

MAWU is not prepared to sacrifice the clear principles on which the union was founded in 1973.

SHOP FLOOR BASED – the strength of the union lies in factory floor organisation.

WORKER CONTROL – control by union members through elected representatives.

WORKER MANDATES – no negotiations at any level without a worker mandate.

NON-RACIAL – all workers regardless of race are free to join the union.

NOW...

MAWU will demand decent minimum wages, job security and the reduction of working hours.

MAWU will fight for the right of workers to negotiate at their own factory.

MAWU will mobilise around united worker demands. MAWU will refer all agreements to its grass roots membership.