

FOSATU

WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



May 1982



WORKERS stream through the gates of the Wattville Stadium on their way to MAWU's annual general meeting.

Thousands attend MAWU meeting

ABOUT 4 000 members of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) attended the union's annual general meeting held in Wattville stadium on May Day, Saturday May 1.

Representatives and members of other FOSATU unions as well as non-FOSATU unions were also present.

Busloads of workers came in from Brits, Northern and Southern Natal, and smaller delegations came from Witbank and many other centres.

The meetings was addressed by MAWU office bearers and speakers from all other unions affiliated to FOSATU.

GROWTH

Central themes in all the MAWU speeches and reports were the union's rapid growth last year and the need to strengthen the organisation in newly organised factories.

Transvaal secretary Rodney Nwamba reported that MAWU membership in the area had increased from 11 000 to 26 000 and eighty factories

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Unions meet to discuss

No major obstacles, say delegates

unity

DELEGATES from twelve unions and union co-ordinating bodies from all over South Africa met in Johannesburg at the end of last month to continue discussions on greater unity between democratic worker organisations.

The meeting was a sequel to the historic summit meeting held in Cape Town last year when the entire independent union movement came together to discuss mutual problems and challenges, and took joint decisions on a number of issues.

Unions and co-ordinating bodies represented at last month's meeting were FOSATU, the Food and Canning Workers' Union and African Food and Canning Workers' Union; the General Workers' Union; the Motor Assemblers' and Component Workers' Union of SA and the General Workers' Union of SA; the Cape Town Municipal Workers' Association; the SA Allied Workers' Union; the National Federation of Workers; the Orange-Vaal General Workers' Union; the General and Allied Workers' Union and the Black Municipality Workers' Union.

The Council of Unions of South Africa and the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union sent apologies.

DELEGATION

FOSATU was represented by Chris Dlamini, national president, Andrew Zulu, vice-president, Joe Foster, general secretary, Fred Sauls, Eastern Province region, Joe Gomomo, Eastern Province region, Alec Erwin, Natal region, Dusty Ngwane, Transvaal re-

gional chairman and Nimrod Luti, Transvaal region.

Before the meeting there was widespread speculation in the press that the meeting would be tense and could even break down, mainly because of FOSATU's widely-publicised stance on unity taken at its second national congress. But these predictions were proved wrong.

MAC WUSA

The delegation from MacWusa walked out as they said they refused to participate any further in meetings with

included registered unions or unions on industrial councils.

But all other unions present felt that there were no major obstacles in the way of further unity discussions.

According to views expressed at the meeting the only major potential obstacle was the lack of worker control and democracy within certain unions.

As long as workers were taking the decisions within their unions, it was felt that all unions could work with one another and agree to disagree if they could not find unanimity on certain

issues.

DEMOCRACY

Important discussions were held on the principles on which unity should be based. Most participants felt that unity should not be expedient but should be based on strong and entrenched principles.

Among those discussed were worker control, democracy within unions, non-racialism, community involvement, political involvement, industrial unions, and the ability to remain independent within a federation and disagree with

other member unions.

SUMMIT

The meeting ended after fruitful and constructive discussions and adopted a resolution whereby a smaller meeting is to be held in Port Elizabeth within two months, where documents will be discussed and circulated.

This is to provide a basis for a further summit meeting later this year. Meanwhile, the solidarity committees set up after the Cape Town summit last year will continue to meet.

FOSATU's stance spelled out

FOSATU's demand for "disciplined unity" was a major topic of discussion at the recent unity meeting in Johannesburg.

At the meeting, a delegate explained FOSATU's policy stance on the issue as follows:

"By disciplined unity we mean unity in an organisation in which member unions can see how decisions are taken and mandates are given. We do not believe that any federation should dictate to member unions.

"We also believe there should be room for disagreement between unions in any such federation. However, for a federation to work it must be based on clear principles which every member

union should accept.

"If they do not accept these, they should not be in the federation," he said.

WORKER CONTROL

FOSATU believed that these principles should include democratic decision-making and worker control over unions; non-racialism; involvement in community and political affairs, and industrial unionism.

Also, where these principles were entrenched in federation decisions they should be binding on all affiliates.

The spokesman added: "We also believe that the federation should have clear structures so that decision-making can be democratic and disciplined. Decisions must be taken by

representatives who have the mandate and constitutional authority to do so."

RESOLUTION

FOSATU's stance on unity follows a policy resolution adopted at its second national congress held earlier last month.

Congress reaffirmed FOSATU's commitment to building a united working class movement and to unite with other non-racial trade unions.

It also spelled out a detailed programme for working towards unity—and said it was willing to dissolve FOSATU if this would help to achieve unity.

However, congress made it clear that FOSATU would not accept any form of unity and that a united movement

would have to be disciplined, non-racial and democratic.

PROGRAMME

The programme for working towards unity is as follows:

*FOSATU will seek out worker organisations which broadly agree with its policies.

*It will move closer to them by discussing FOSATU's policies and positions with them.

*FOSATU will then begin to discuss with them how disciplined unity should be achieved.

*It will draft a constitution for a new body together with these organisations.

*It will then plan to merge existing unions with others and form joint organisations.