

FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



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THOUSANDS of FOSATU workers demonstrated their opposition to the new constitution by wearing 'One Man One Vote' stickers on the days before the white referendum.

And more than 80 000 pamphlets outlining FOSATU's stand on the constitution were handed out to workers country-wide.

This peaceful protest was an overwhelming success as workers demanded to know from their bosses whether the company supported the 'yes' or 'no' vote.

The most common response was that 'business is separate from politics' and that politics must be kept as a 'private' matter.

This response was completely overshadowed by the fact that a number of South Africa's top businessmen used their positions to publicly campaign for the 'yes' vote.

And when the 'yes' result was announced, employers welcomed the result saying that it would 'stabilise' the political situation in South Africa and therefore encourage foreign investment.

However, it is clear from FOSATU's campaign that workers feel very strongly about the so-called reforms and reject them as merely 'further entrenching apartheid and racism'.

In a statement released after the referendum, FOSATU general secretary, Joe Foster, said 'political stability in South Africa can never be assured until all people, regardless of race, are given equal political and social rights.'

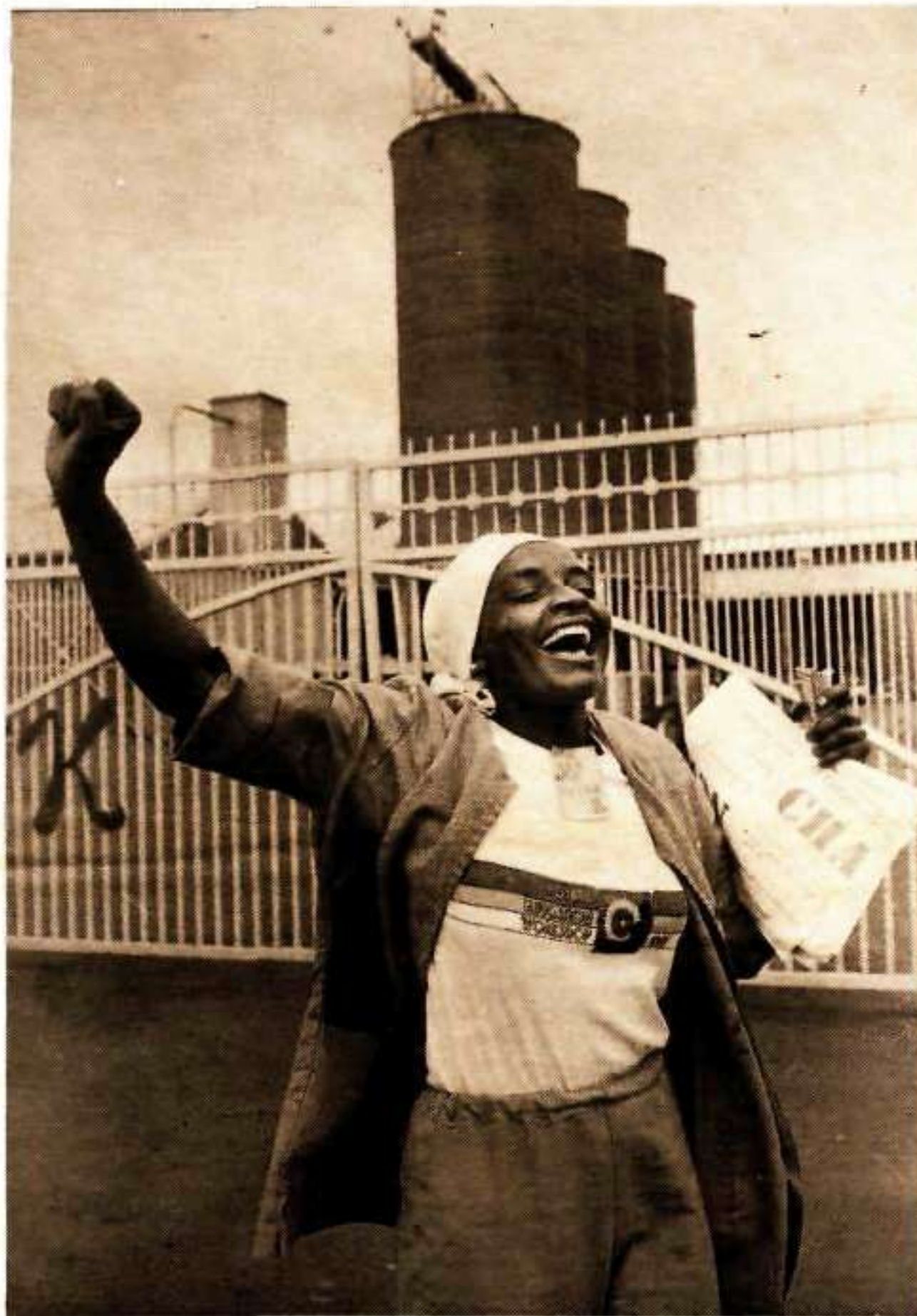
FOSATU rejects the new constitution on the grounds that it is:

- * Undemocratic - the vast majority of South Africa's people will still be left without a vote.
- * Racist - the old apartheid structures remain unchanged.
- * Anti-Worker - the new constitution tries to divide the non-racial strength of workers.

Despite employers attempts to keep 'politics' as a 'private matter', the campaign was carried right into the factories.

The workers stuck up stickers in the factory and wore them all over their overalls.

Although the campaign was carried out peacefully by the workers, not all the employers responded as peacefully.



A number of companies banned the wearing of stickers in the factory and instructed supervisors and security guards to tear off stickers from overalls.

At Kent Meters, a Johannesburg metal factory, two workers were fired during the campaign.

Brother Reginal Pupazana said a manager had come up to him and then just tore the sticker off his overall.

'I asked him why he was doing this. He then accused me of being a politician and of wanting to control the workers.'

'I tried to show him that he must have some respect for the workers but he just said I must go out,' Brother Pupazana said.

He said he had refused to go out and was then called to the manager's office.

There, Brother Pupazana

said, the manager accused him of recruiting for the Metal and Allied Workers Union and suggested that workers should resign from the union as it was a 'political' union.

'I told him that I had already chosen my union. He then said I was too impossible and must get out of the factory,' he said.

Brother Pupazana said he had gone to the changing room to get his things and while there a shop steward had asked what was going on.

'I started to explain when the manager came in and told the shop steward that he was fired also,' he said.

A similar incident also happened at Triomf Fertiliser in Richards Bay.

Senior shop steward, Muzi Buthelezi was hauled off the company bus by secur-

ity guards and had all his pamphlets and stickers confiscated.

The company called in the police but were forced to release him when the workers on the bus got off and refused to leave without him.

From then on armed security guards patrolled the canteen and changing rooms to make sure that no-one wore the FOSATU stickers.

Triomf attempted to have Brother Buthelezi fired for distributing 'political matter', but at the hearing the Chemical Workers Industrial Union had this reduced to a warning.

However, employers have not been alone in their 'interest' in the FOSATU campaign.

At Epol, the Security Police confiscated campaign pamphlets and stickers.

This led to a strike by the entire workforce which demanded that the management get their pamphlets back.

Epol claimed that they had nothing to do with the confiscation of the pamphlets but admitted that an informer within the factory had told the Security Police about the pamphlets.

Eventually after a meeting between the Security Police and the company the pamphlets were returned.

The workers have now demanded that action be taken against 'spies' and that they be paid for the time they had been on strike.

FOSATU condemned these actions and has pledged itself to keep up the fight against 'the farce the present government calls reform'.



WE SAY NO

Workers demonstrate on Referendum day