

FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



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The Commission on Detentions set up by the Eastern Province region of FOSATU is mounting a massive campaign in a bid to put an end to the 'merciless' assaults being carried out by police on detainees.

The first step in their campaign was the recent temporary order granted by the Port Elizabeth Supreme Court on September 25.

The order requires that the Minister of Law and Order and several high ranking police officers in the Uitenhage/Port Elizabeth area 'take all reasonable steps within their power' to prevent any member of the SA Police from assaulting or even threatening to assault any person now being detained in terms of the emergency regulations or those who will be detained in future.

The Supreme Court also ordered that the interim order be read to all detainees by the commanding officers at St Albans and North End prisons.

The court order was granted after a young district surgeon, Dr Wendy Orr, told the court that emergency detainees were being systematically and brutally assaulted on a massive scale by police.

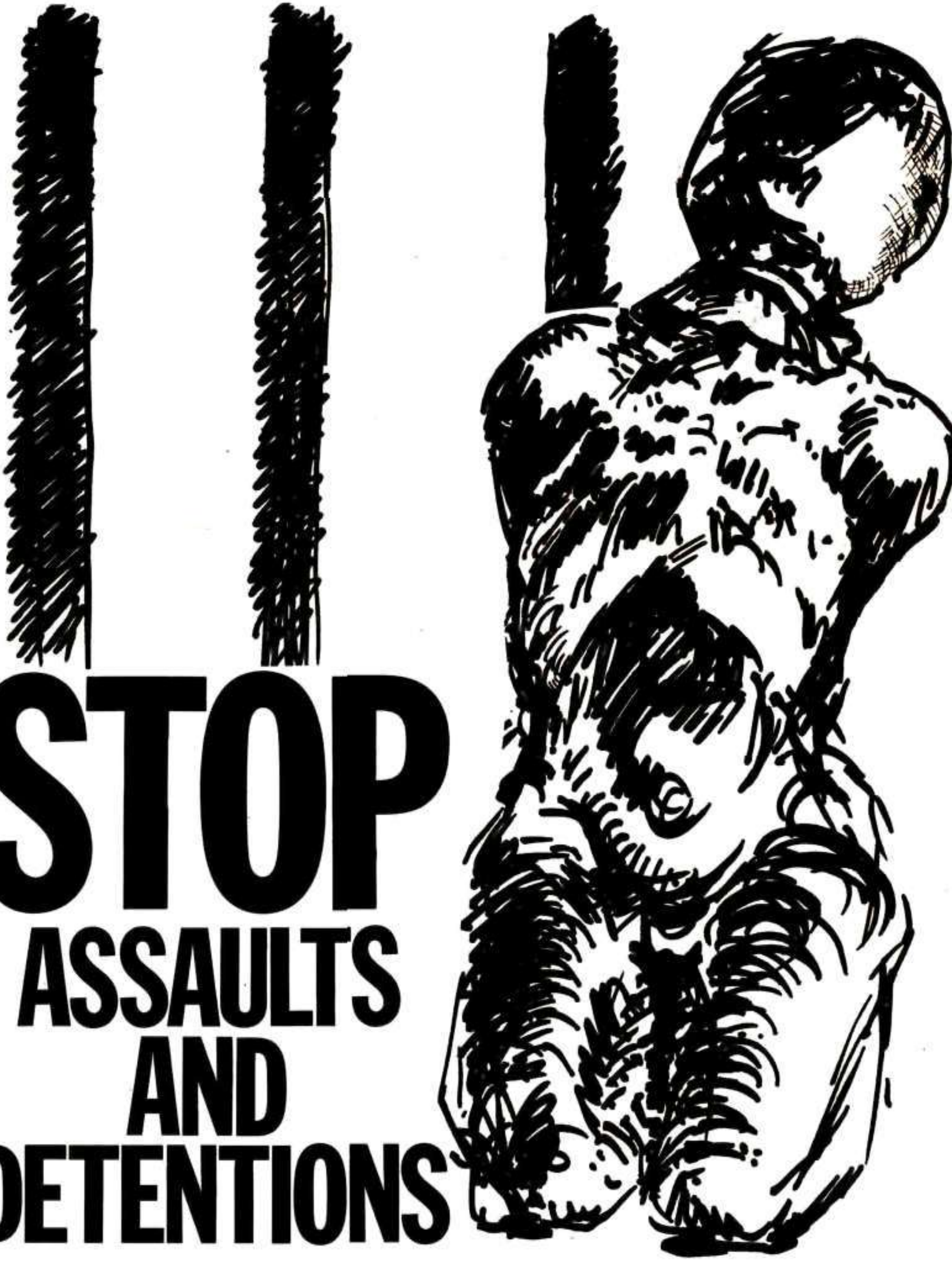
Her evidence was supported by 42 other affidavits mostly from relatives of people being held in detention under the emergency regulations.

Among them is National Automobile and Allied Workers Union general secretary, Fred Sauls, whose two daughters were in detention at that time.

At least 15 members of NAAWU have been detained under the emergency regulations and Samuel Haas, a member from SKF, has been in detention since the State of Emergency was declared.

In her affidavit, Dr Orr says 'there seems to me to be an extensive pattern of police abuse upon detainees held under the emergency

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STOP ASSAULTS AND DETENTIONS

New Federation: Mass rally on December 1 see page 2

Detainee made to eat hair

FROM PAGE 1 regulations'.

'The overwhelming evidence presented to me in the St Albans and North End prisons convinced me that detainees were being systematically assaulted and abused after their arrest and before being admitted to prison and also during their imprisonment when they were being interrogated at the Louis Le Grange police station.'

She adds that it had become apparent that the police believe that under the emergency regulations they cannot not be held responsible for the abuses and the department of Prisons and Health are 'unconcerned and have turned a blind eye'.

Since the beginning of August, Dr Orr says, she has examined 20 newly admitted detainees per day at the Port Elizabeth prisons and that an 'inordinately' large proportion of them complained of being assaulted by police.

Detainees she examined had bruising, weals, and blisters, on their backs, arms and palms of their hands. Some had lacerated lips and the skin over their cheekbones was split. Several had perforated eardrums.

One case she describes had weals from his shoulders to his buttocks. 'There were so many weals I could not count them. They were superimposed on one another,' she says.

Among the horrific complaints made to Dr Orr were that one detainee had been made to eat his own hair and another was forced to drink petrol. One detainee told her that he had been made to stand barefoot while a policeman dropped a brick on top of his foot.

On November 26, the Port Elizabeth Supreme Court will be sitting again to hear the details of the case being brought by Dr Orr and 42 others against the police.

In order to strengthen this case, the Commission on Detentions has issued a general call for all those who have 'experienced the brutality of the system' to come forward and draw up an affidavit.

As FOSATU Worker News went to print, 50 000 pamphlets were being prepared for distribution in the Eastern Cape Region. The pamphlet reads 'Assaults and detentions must come to an end. But in order for them to come to an end people must be prepared to take action'.

The pamphlet calls on all people who have been assaulted, threatened with assault, or who have witnessed an assault, or even relatives of detainees, to submit an affidavit in support of the case.

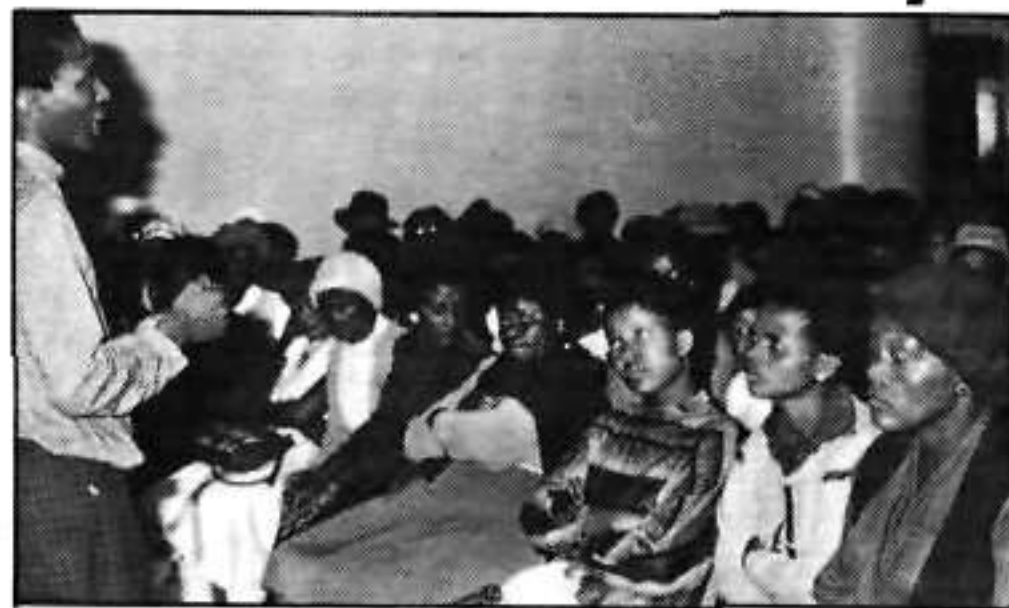
PREMIER group's Farm Fare locked out about 500 workers at the company's Wynberg factory on October 14 and would not allow them back into the plant until they accepted new conditions of service which include compulsory overtime and extended working hours.

Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union organiser, David Makgema, said the union, which represents over 440 workers at the plant, had been holding negotiations with the company since July 15.

'After several meetings we reached a deadlock when Farm Fare came forward with its final offer of a R9,30 increase per week on condition that the workers agree to compulsory overtime and extended working hours.'

'The union completely rejected that. We are demanding a

Farm Fare workers locked-out of factory



SFAWU organiser, David Makgema, discusses the lock-out with Farm Fare workers

R19 across-the-board increase.'

'On September 29 the company applied for a conciliation board. In the meantime it issued several notices saying that workers must agree to new working conditions,' Brother Makgema said.

'The conciliation board was not appointed within 30 days and when workers arrived at work on Monday October 14 they found the gate locked.'

'A poster on the gate said that only workers who signed a form agreeing to the new conditions of service would be let through the gate,' he said.

'The workers had little choice but to sign the forms under protest,' Brother Makgema said.

'The union has told the company that it reserves the right to raise the matter in the immediate future,' he added.

New federation is a giant

THERE are less than 30 days to go before the launch of the largest progressive trade union federation this country has ever seen.

Thirty-six trade unions, with a total signed up membership of close on half-a-million members (500 000), are moving swiftly towards the Inaugural Congress which will be held in Durban over the weekend of November 30-December 1.

On the Sunday, December 1, a mass rally will be held in Durban to celebrate the federation's launch. Tens of thousands of workers will be bused in from all areas of South

Africa.

For the first time in South Africa's labour history, there will be a federation which will really cover all areas of this country.

Judging from an assessment of where the membership of the unions is located, there could be as many as 10 regions although the federation is likely to initially start off with less than that.

The major goal of the federation will be to form one giant union in each of this country's industrial sectors.

And in order to achieve this

as speedily as possible, the credentials committee has drawn up a list of industrial sectors and meetings have been held between the unions in particular industries to discuss the possibility of mergers.

At the Inaugural Congress, each union will be represented on the basis of one delegate for every 500 members up to 20 000 and then thereafter one delegate per 1 000 members. At future congresses this will revert back to one per 500 members.

The major function of the congress will be to accept the

draft constitution, elect the office bearers (all of who will be workers) and general secretary, and then debate the various resolutions submitted by the unions.

The congress will also have to decide on a name for the federation (at the moment the firm favourite is the 'Congress of South African Trade Unions') and select the symbol.

Designs for a symbol can be submitted on an A3 sheet of paper to the congress convenor, Cyril Ramaphosa, general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, Lekton House, 5 Wanderers St, Johannesburg.

No union says USA firm

THE manager of American-owned company, Fisher Flying Products, at Empangeni has retrenched 46 Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union members shortly after having told a union organiser that she did not want a union.

The retrenched workers were told on the morning of September 6 that they were to be retrenched that same day.

They were given their week's wages and told to go. They were not given notice pay, severance pay nor were they given their UIF cards.

After having organised 56 out of the 75 workers, on July 15 PWAU asked for a meeting to discuss union recognition but were told that the company did not want a union.

From then on the personnel officer at the factory began questioning workers about the union. Workers refused to answer and demanded a meeting with the manager on August 30.

When they gathered for the meeting at 7 am apparently the manager told workers that they were on strike and instructed them to clean the factory. This they did.

They were told to bring their pass books on September 3. However, nothing happened and work continued as usual until the 46 were laid off.

The union is considering taking the company to court for unfairly retrenching the workers.

Asea Cables fires white artisan

ASEA Cables fired a white artisan who assaulted the senior shop steward at the Rosslyn factory but only after some 800 workers at three Asea factories took strike action.

Metal and Allied Workers Union organiser, Peter Dantjie said the assault occurred on Thursday September 19 after the artisan had accidentally stepped on Brother G Selau's foot.

'Selau asked the artisan to apologise but instead of doing so, he punched him,' Brother Dantjie said.

The case was taken up with Asea Cables' management and the artisan was suspended with full pay pending the matter being resolved.

'But workers were dissatisfied with management's action and demanded the immediate dismissal of the artisan.'

'Management refused saying that they had treated the matter fairly and besides they were being criticised by the artisan's union for their action,' Brother Dantjie said.

So, on Tuesday September 24, the workers at Asea Cables stopped production in protest — they were joined by workers from Asea Pretoria West and Asea Z Division.

Brother Dantjie said management had tried to divide the workers by refusing to recognise the right of the Asea National Executive Committee to handle the matter. They also threatened to dismiss some of the Asea workers.

'But by daily shop steward meetings after knock off time

we managed to control the strike. General meetings were also held every morning at all three factories.'

On September 26 each shop steward committee had meetings with their local management. Eventually,

management agreed that from that day onwards the artisan would 'no longer be in the employment of the company' and that procedures would be amended 'to ensure that a recurrence of this sort cannot be repeated'.

SANS calls for lifting of State of Emergency

IN an interesting move, South African Nylon Spinners (SANS) has called for the lifting of the State of Emergency, the abolition of detention without trial and all racist legislation, and the granting of citizenship and freedom of movement for all of South Africa's people.

This was contained in a letter to National Union of Textile Workers' members at the company's Bellville plant who have been caught up in the recent unrest in the Western Cape. A number of them were injured on August 29 (Bloody Thursday) when police used birdshot to break up a student march in Bellville.

In the letter SANS says 'the process of real and meaningful reform must be accelerated through negotiation with the acknowledged and accepted leaders of all sections of the community, even though some may be in detention.'

The purpose of this negotiation will be to establish 'an acceptable and workable political dispensation based on power sharing in one constitution, in one country', SANS adds.

However, despite SANS' support for 'a fair and just society within a healthy and dynamic country' there is a barb in the tail-end of the company's letter to its workers.

The letter goes on to say that it must be made clear that the company is 'an economic and not a political entity' and therefore 'irrespective of the sympathies of management, our first responsibility is to maintain a viable business'.

So, although the company sympathises and understands the intentions of action such as prayer days (and presumably stayaways or strikes) these 'could put the company's objectives and thereby the employees best economic interests at risk', the letter concludes.