

# FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



SPECIAL EDITION

## FOSATU Education Workshop — a day of worker culture

SONGS, poems, plays, dancing and other forms of culture, play an important role in the workers' struggle.

So it is fitting that FOSATU each year has set aside a day to celebrate workers' culture — the FOSATU Education Workshop. And each year it has been bigger and better.

The first Education Workshop held at the University of Witwatersrand in 1982 seems tiny in comparison to what has been planned for this year.

Thousands of workers from all over the Reef are expected to stream in to Soweto's Jabulani Stadium — some workers will also be coming all the way from FOSATU's other regions: the Eastern and Western Cape and Natal.

Unlike other events held at Jabulani stadium, the emphasis at the FOSATU Education Workshop is on workers.

There will be lots of worker choirs, workers will recite their poetry, workers will be performing plays, and there will be talks by workers on issues like retrenchment. Like May Day this is another day specially for workers.

The Durban Workers' Cultural Local says 'it is hard to sing, to write and perform if you are a worker.'

'Everyday in the factory or down a mine, we get the last drop of energy sucked out of our bodies.'

But, workers are beginning to fight back. And the large number of songs, plays and poems now being written and performed by workers is a sign of just that!

'Up till now,' the Durban cultural group says, 'black workers have been parading, boxing, acting and writing within a system they did not control — all their creativity has been fed into a culture machine to make profits for others.'

'It is time for us to begin controlling our creativity. We must create space in our struggle — through our own songs, our own slogans, our own poems, our own artwork, our own plays and dances.'

In the workers' struggle for liberation from exploitation and the creation of a better world for workers, culture plays an important role.

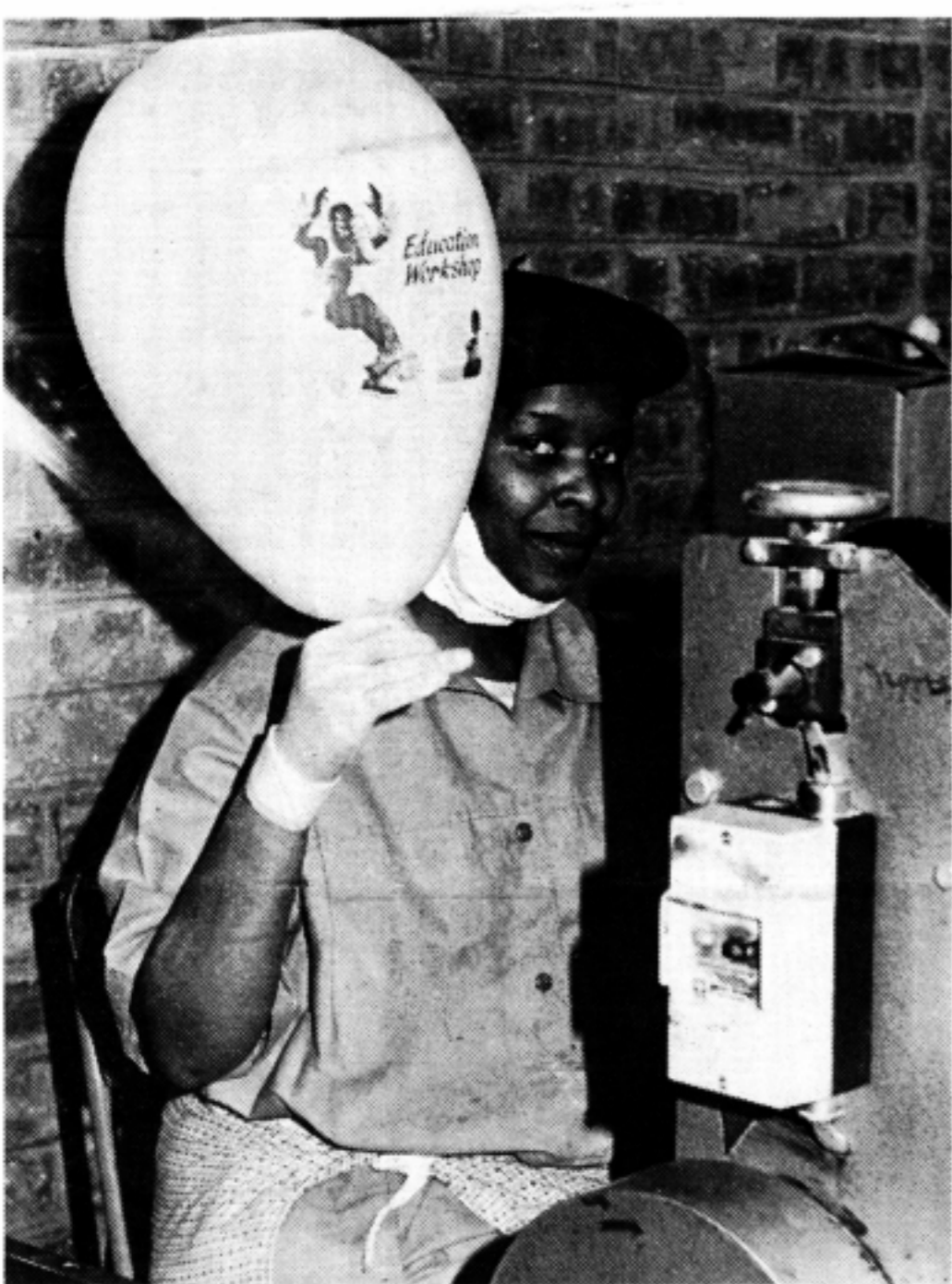
Worker culture is not just entertainment. But that does not mean that we cannot enjoy the FOSATU Education Workshop.

Some of the plays, poems, choirs and dancers will make you laugh. But not so that you can escape and forget all about the workers' struggle — they will continually remind you of our struggle for freedom.

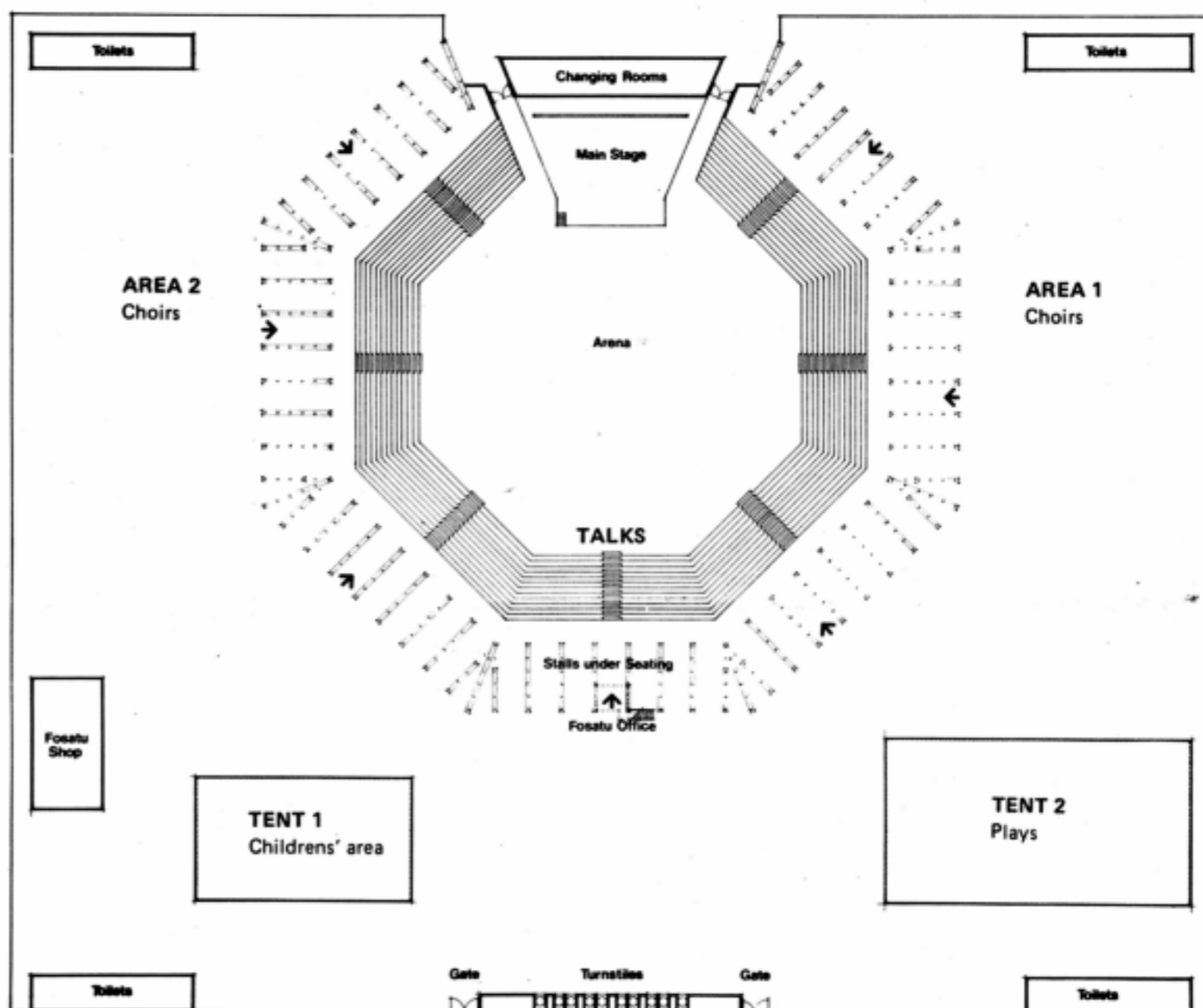


The Frame dancers showing the form that last year earned them a standing ovation





*CWIU member at Vulco Latex making balloons for the FOSATU Education Workshop*



## New worker book

A NEW worker book called 'My Life Struggle' which covers fifty years of South Africa's rich political and cultural history will be launched at the FOSATU Education Workshop.

It is written by Petrus Tom, an organiser for the Metal and Allied Workers Union. The book is the story of his life and starts from when he was born in the Top Location near Vereeniging in 1935.

He tells of how he first joined a union shortly after starting work at a bakery. Tom was also a member of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) during the 60's.

Tom's family was moved to Sharpeville where he witnessed the horror of the Sharpeville massacre. Unionism weakened considerably during the repressive 60's.

In the wake of the 1973 strikes, Tom again joined a union. After conflicts in this union he left to join MAWU and later became a union organiser in Vereeniging where he still works.

# Choirs now on record

AS FOSATU unions move into more factories, as membership grows, and with each new struggle or victory, new songs get sung.

The Braitex Choir sings with the B & S struggle in their minds and each day of the Dunlop strike produced new entertainment and songs.

Already choirs that have been singing in Mbube competitions for years in Natal, are beginning to sing about FOSATU.

The Sizanani Lucky Stars from Pietermaritzburg say 'Mayibonge FOSATU' as they weave around the stage in their smart suits and bow ties.

Ten of the 15 members in this choir belong to the Transport and General Workers Union.

At this year's TGWU AGM they had the crowd shouting and swaying as they sang.

This is the first year they have sung at a trade union AGM. But the members say there will be more songs about this union which is helping them.

The Clover Choir from Durban used to be called the

Greytown Evening Birds.

They have been singing since some of their present members were young boys — more than ten years. Now all its singers are members of the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union.

But they still sing in Mbube competitions against the best Durban choirs. They don't shy away from the Danger Boys or the Durban Easy Walkers.

Clover know they can look as smart and sing and dance as powerfully as any other choir at the Dalton Hall hostel in Durban on any Saturday night of the year.

In Springs, the K Team, the Kellogs Choirs are making songs that show the times South Africa is going through.

One of their songs remembers Andries Raditsela. Another praises the Sasol workers for the strength they showed in their past struggle. They also sing about the frustrations of the majority of South Africans.

Here is one of their songs:

The black nation is in the dark.

We will die unaware because we have no representative in parliament.

But now we have a representative. It is FOSATU. FOSATU is our representative.

Choirs throughout the country are beginning to sing new songs about their situations and struggles.

Many of them will be singing at this year's FOSATU Education Workshop and workers who would like to take the sound and songs of these choirs home with them can buy a cassette tape or record of a selection of FOSATU workers' choirs for R5.



*Hear the well-known Braitex choir (above) on the record*

**'Our gathering at Jabulani Stadium this July spells fear for many institutions of power in South Africa. There is no doubt their fear is justified. These institutions have dehumanised, exploited and ignored us on the basis of class and colour. To their surprise, we have come here in all shades from all shadows of life to say YES — we are ready to fight for better living conditions, for better wages and to end injustice and exploitation. But we have also gathered here to begin giving shape to a world we would like to live in — a world without exploitation, without discrimination and fear. In this struggle, cultural work has a crucial role to play.'**

*From a talk to be given by the Durban Workers' Cultural Local.*

## Fulani Poets: small in size but big in heart

COMRADES, please welcome the Fulani Poets from Daveyton. The Fulani Poets are small in size but their hearts are big.

Here are some of the lines from one of their poems called 'FOSATU Speaks':  
 Speak! FOSATU Speak!  
 Workers unite and fight for your rights  
 Hlanganani Basebenzi  
 Unity is strength! We shall win!

The Fulani Poets are six kids from Daveyton. The youngest is only six and the oldest is twelve years old.

Herman Morotla is the father of one of the kids. He wrote some of the poems and picked the others from books.

Herman says: 'I want to teach the kids about what's happening in FOSATU.'



*The Fulani Poets practising for the Workshop*



## AREA 1 Choirs

10.30: Simba Chips  
10.45: SMT (1)  
11.00: Mooi River Textiles  
11.15: Braitex  
11.30: Clover  
11.45: I & J  
12.00: Prestige  
12.15: Lucky Boys  
12.30: Hammarsdale

## AREA 2 Choirs

10.30: Samancor  
10.45: K Team  
11.00: SMT (2)  
11.15: Vulco Latex  
11.30: Frametex  
11.45: Caramel  
12.00: Umbrella Industries  
12.15: MAWU Brits  
12.30: DTMB

## TENT 1 Plays

10.30: NUM's play on health and safety  
11.00: NUTW's play about the workers' struggle  
11.30: Umzi Weny'indoda — General Workers' Union  
12.00: Why Lord — Durban Workers' Cultural Local  
12.30: Usuku — Durban Workers' Cultural Local  
13.00: The Move — Garankuwa workers' play

## ARENA Talks

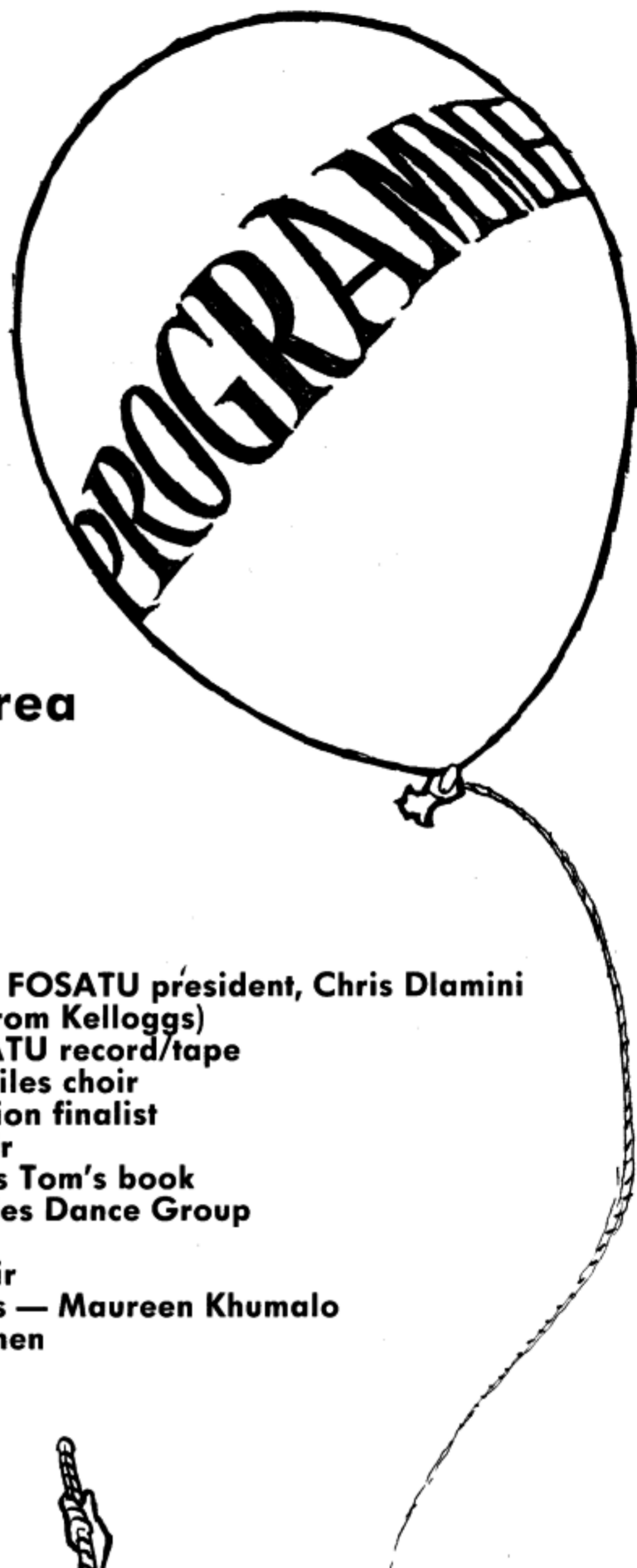
10.30: Retrenchment by Transvaal group  
11.15: Worker Culture by Durban group  
12.00: Talk by Eastern Cape group  
12.45: POETRY COMPETITION

## TENT 2 Childrens' area

10.30: Karate exhibition  
11.15: The Fulani Poets  
11.30: Singing  
12.00: The Young Workers  
12.30: Singing  
12.45: Mask Mime

# MAIN ARENA EVENTS

2.00: Opening talk — FOSATU president, Chris Dlamini  
2.15: K Team (choir from Kelloggs)  
2.30: Launch of FOSATU record/tape  
2.45: Mooi River Textiles choir  
3.00: Poetry competition finalist  
3.15: CCAWUSA choir  
3.30: Launch of Petrus Tom's book  
3.45: Secunda Collieries Dance Group  
4.00: Braitex choir  
4.15: Cape Town choir  
4.30: Women Workers — Maureen Khumalo  
4.45: Malombo Jazzmen





# Three plays from Durban cultural group

THE three plays that the Durban Workers Cultural Local will be putting on at the Education Workshop all deal with situations that will be familiar to most workers.

'Why Lord' which was first performed during the Dunlop strike in 1984 is about the hurt and pain of the migrant labour system.

A man from the Transkei decides that he has to go to Durban to look for a job even though he has no papers because his family's situation is desperate.

He finds a job as a night-watchman and finds accommodation at the shacklord's place in a black township.

After ten years of not receiving any news of her husband, the wife makes her way to the city as well.

She finds accommodation at the same shacklord's place whilst working day-shift at a textile factory.

The husband and wife never meet because of their different worktimes.

They both find different



Confrontation — a scene from the play 'Why Lord'

lovers — he, his wife's best friend and, she, the shacklord.

This 'comic' situation quickly turns into a tragedy when the husband, after losing his job, meets his wife at her wedding. She has decided to marry the

shacklord.

'Usuku', a play by Dunlop Sports' worker Mi S'Dumo Hlatshwayo, is set at a factory where the workers are just beginning to feel powerful in their new found unity. They

have committed themselves to a major general strike.

Their employer who has heard rumours about the event is eager to find out more about 'the dog' (usuku).

The play revolves around a

terrible dilemma that one of the workers, Shabalala, finds himself in.

The employer has offered him money for information about 'the dog' — money which he desperately needs as his child is seriously ill.

Retrenchment is the subject of the third play, 'Gallows for Mr Scariot Mpimpi', which is also written by Mi Hlatshwayo.

This two-man play shows how the economy even pushes management to lay-off its 'yes-baas' men like Scariot.

Scariot who had victimised workers to please his employer and to increase his power finds himself evicted by the system he had learned to love.

The Durban Workers Cultural Local will also be performing a 'Mime Mask' which was put together by the Dunlop workers during their 1984 strike.

The mime shows how an employer takes out on his wife the frustration he feels because his employees are on strike. But in his sleep he is always haunted by the striking workers.

## Unemployed workers form a self-help group

# No bosses here!

UNEMPLOYMENT is a big problem in the township at Brits, as it is in many places in South Africa.

'At the Labour office, you don't find jobs. You only find long queues of men and women. They all wait there for jobs,' says Leah Thage, a worker who lost her job after a strike at B & S, a factory at Brits.

Forty-five workers got sick and tired of sitting around and waiting for a job that might never come. They decided to form a self-help group and make things to sell.

The church in the area lent them some money to buy machines and material and also gave them a room in which they could work.

The sewing group first made Seshoeshoe dresses and Jikisas but three months later they got their first orders. They began making clothes for weddings and they also got an order from a choir.

In the group everyone is equal. There is no boss. 'At this place the workers control everything,' says. 'We do not need

bosses. We decide how we must learn and work together.'

When the group first started, Rebecca says 'working without a boss was difficult. We made many mistakes because we had no rules.'

'Now we have some rules — like working hours. We start work at 8 o'clock and finish at 3 o'clock. If we want to leave work early we must first ask the others. And if you can't come to work, you must send a message.'

The workers at Brits don't make much money. For the

first three months they made nothing at all. When they make a little money, they share it equally amongst themselves.

'We are much happier working for ourselves. It's better than the factories. At the factory we often worked for more than nine hours. Now we have time to see our children. We have time to rest our bones,' says Rebecca.

The Brits self-help group will be showing (and selling) what they have made at their stall at the FOSATU Workshop.

## Never too young

YOU are never too young to get organised. That's what the Future Workers think.

They're a group of young kids who want to be part of the struggle. The Future Workers' parents work at Braitex and in June this year, Beth Mthombeni helped them to get organised.

The Future Workers will be marching and beating drums at the FOSATU Workshop. All the children are sure to love them.

At the Workshop they will be wearing red shirts and FOSATU T shirts. The Future workers say they will be happy to meet with the older people to talk about the struggle.

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