

## **A/FCWU: Harassment in East London**

The East London branch of African/Food and Canning Workers Union (A/FCWU), suffered a major blow when its offices were gutted by fire in the early hours of Saturday, February 11, this year. According to reports the fire was started inside the union's offices around 2.00 a.m., and by 2.30 a.m. everything was destroyed. Arson is suspected.

The independent unions have experienced enormous difficulties in organising workers in the Eastern Cape. Confronted with a hostile triple alliance of management, the state and Ciskei bantustan authorities, the unionists have had to weather continued harassment, surveillance and detentions.

Despite a small local membership of approximately 2,500 A/FCWU has become a significant union in the area. The union began organising in 1980 in East London and throughout this period has had difficulties in finding offices. Repeated harassment and eviction by landlords has forced the union to move premises on at least 2 occasions.

The fire destroyed all union records and important documents. According to Jan Theron, general secretary of A/FCWU, the damage is incalculable. The East London branch faces a very difficult period getting things back to normal.

(SALB Correspondent, February 1985)