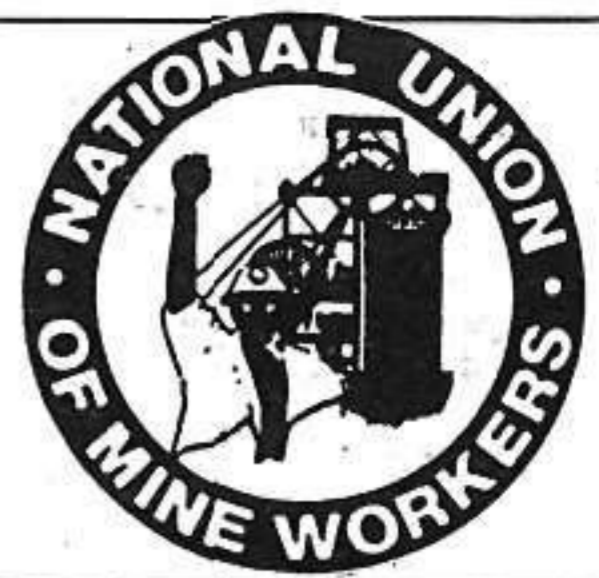


# Num News

## Congress Special



April 1991

# CONGRESS TO CALL FOR THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE INDUSTRY

The National Union of Mineworkers holds its 7th National Congress from the 24th to 28th April this year. The Congress will be held at the Nasrec Showgrounds near Soweto.

Nearly 900 delegates are expected to attend the Congress. The delegates will be from the 16 regions of the union, representing over 270 000 paid up members.

Approximately 30 guests from 8 countries outside of South Africa are also expected. The guests will be representing mineworkers unions and organisations internationally.

The Congress meets at a time when mineworkers are facing widespread retrenchments and possible closures of mines with the resultant unemployment and suffering for the workers, their families and their communities.

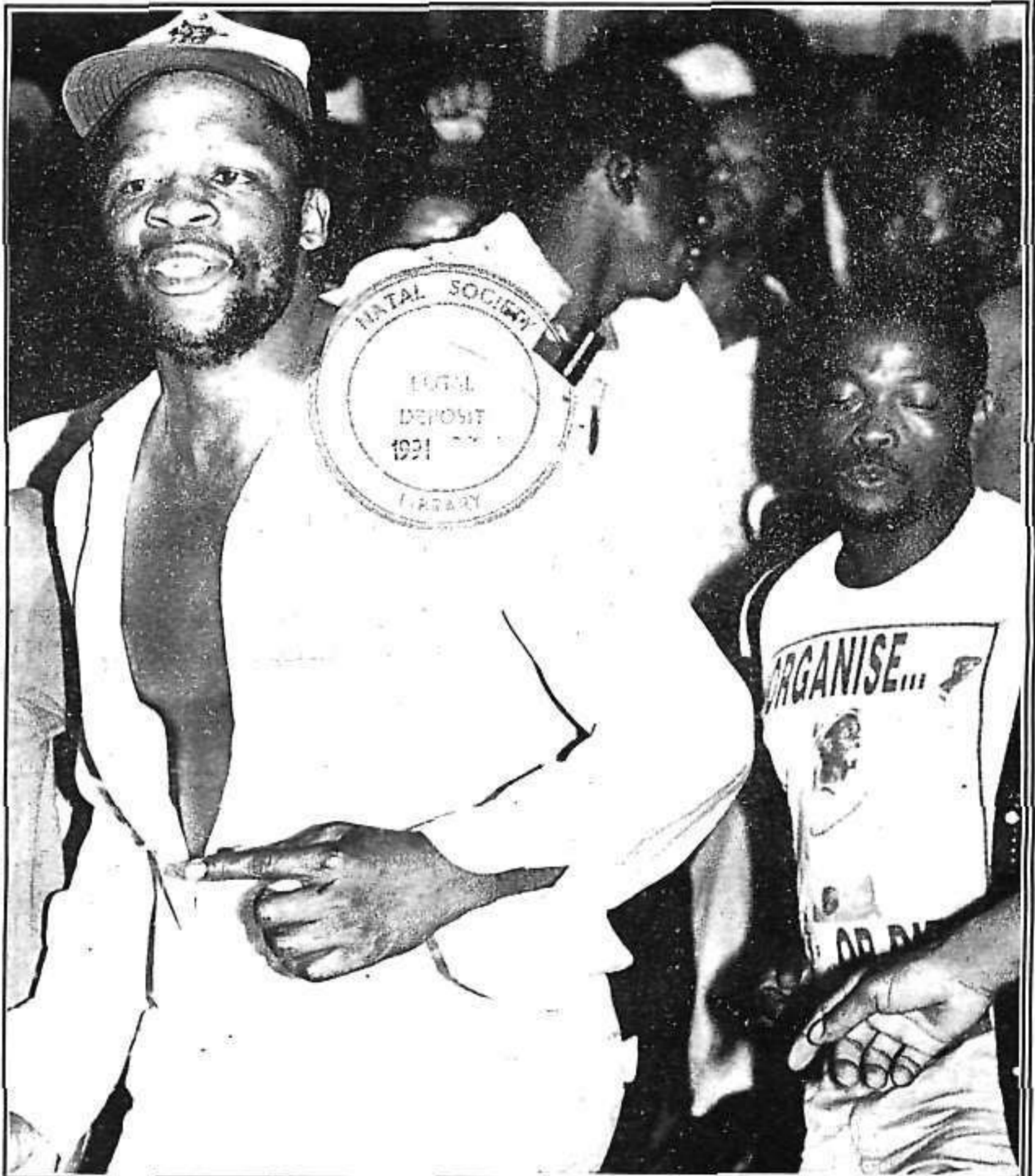
This crisis is not only caused by the low price of gold. It is also the result of decades of mismanagement of the mines by the bosses and the cheap selling off of our country's minerals to capitalist markets all over the world.

The minerals that have been extracted from our country have never been used to uplift the standard of living of either the mineworkers or the oppressed masses of this country.

Instead we have seen the mine bosses enriching only themselves, their relatives and their few chosen friends.

The workers and their families have only known hardship and suffering caused by the starvation wages paid by the mine bosses.

The Congress theme is: Restructuring of the mining industry. Central to this theme



Delegates at the Rustenburg regional conference livening up the proceedings.

is the demand for job security, an end to repression on the mines and the call for a summit to be held to discuss the future of the mining industry.

Resolutions dealing with retrenchments, job security, an end to repression on the mines top the list that has been submitted for debate

at Congress by regions. Political issues also feature prominently in the list of resolutions. The most prominent ones revolve around the demand for a Constituent Assembly, the Interim government, the building of the ANC and the strengthening of the ANC\SACP\COSATU alliance.

**S.A. Mines  
conditions shock  
German visitors  
page 2**

**S.A. Mines:  
Modern slaughter  
houses  
page 4**

**Let us bury  
the racist parliament  
now!  
page 5**

## FORWARD TO THE MINEWORKERS CONGRESS!



# Nationalisation of the mines is the only option - Motlatsi

THE MINING INDUSTRY MUST BE RESTRUCTURED AND THE MINES NATIONALISED SO AS TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF ADDRESSING THE ECONOMIC ILLS OF OUR COUNTRY, SO SAYS JAMES MOTLATSI, PRESIDENT OF THE NUM IN AN INTERVIEW WITH NUM NEWS. HERE WE PUBLISH EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW.

NUM NEWS: Since the 1989 Congress, political changes seem to have affected the NUM political policy?

JAMES MOTLATSI: It is true that the political organisations have been unbanned. De Klerk is trying to remove the apartheid laws from the statute books. The removal of racist laws from the statute books will not necessarily bring about socio-economic changes that are needed to change the standards of living of the masses.

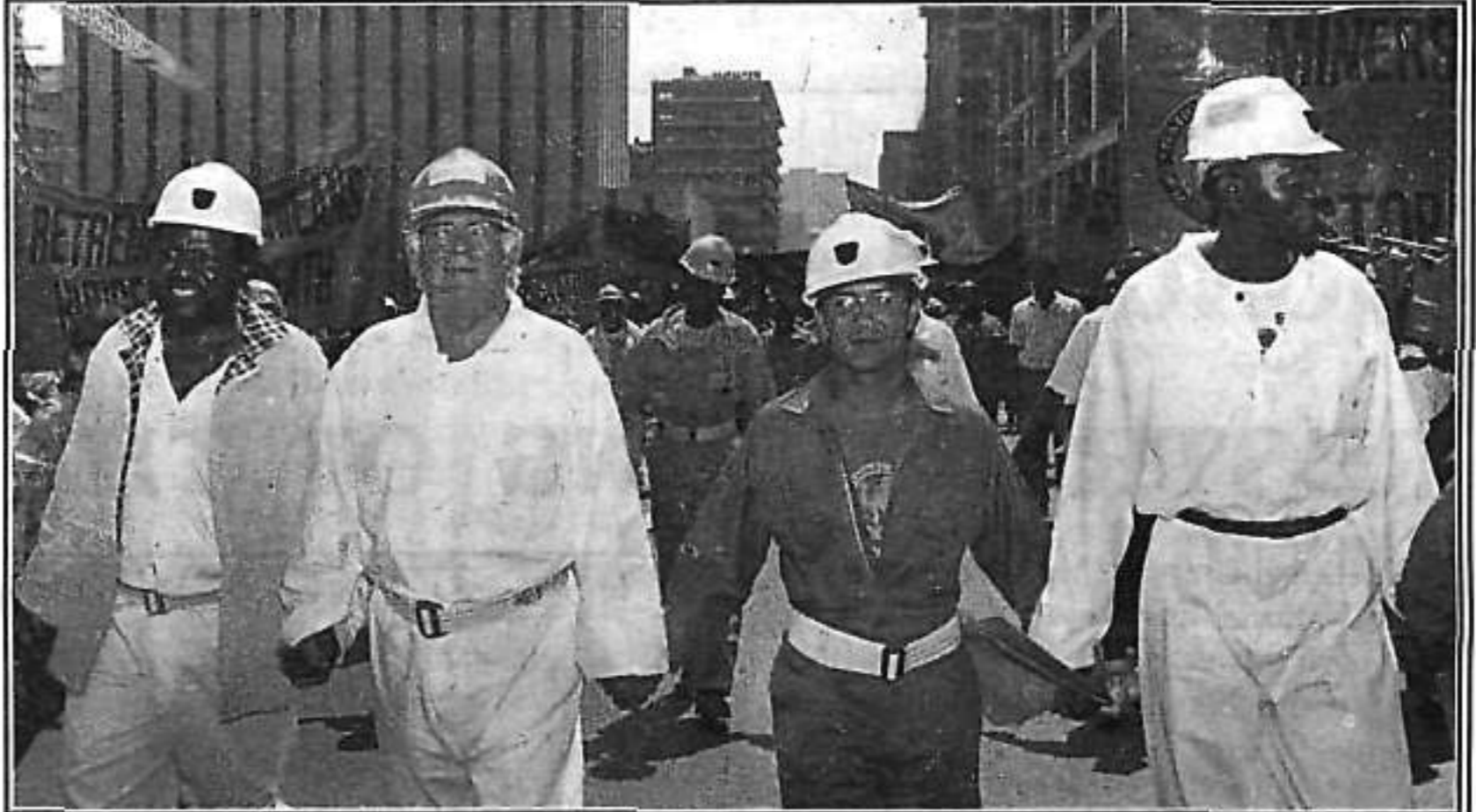
NN: What role could mineworkers play in influencing political changes?

JM: Mineworkers would have to join the ANC and the South African Communist Party, not only as card-carrying members but to play an active role in realising their aims and objectives

NN: What is your view about the adoption of the Freedom Charter?

JM: The Freedom Charter is still our guiding document - more so where it addresses the question of monopolies. Nationalisation of the mines is still the best option to address the question. We are however of the opinion that such a policy will have to be implemented over a long period of time. Only a democratically elected government will be included in such policy implementation. The Nationalist government has not only failed to redress the situation, but has helped in creating the mass of impoverished blacks that has existed for so many decades.

NN: Has the NUM succeeded in eliminat-



Leading the march against retrenchments; from left to right are: James Motlatsi, Joe Slovo, Marcel Golding and Paul Nkuna

ing discrimination on the mines?

JM: Yes, we have made progress, but it is still a thorny issue which will continue for a long time even after a new government has come to power.

The mining industry is the cornerstone of the apartheid structure and mineworkers have a long way to go before all can be said to be well because they are fighting both the government and mine bosses.

NN: What is your view on retrenchments?

JM: In the short term the NUM and management can negotiate and agree on ways of alleviating the problems of retrenchment. The Chamber of Mines is not prepared to comply with our demands because the more

people are out of work, the better it is for them, because their calls for the lifting of sanctions will become louder in the name of creating more jobs. Mismanagement and economic plunder of the country's mineral wealth by mine bosses is the main cause of retrenchments and the resultant suffering of mineworkers

NN: What solutions do you suggest to the mining industry's problems?

JM: Restructuring of the mining industry is the only option.

NN: What is your opinion about the amount paid to retrenched workers?

JM: Mineworkers are among the lowest paid workers in South Africa; even if they were to be given four weeks wages for each year of completed service, the money would be very little and not enough to sustain the same standard of living before being retrenched.

NN: What about the R1million that Anglo American Corporation has set aside for such purposes?

JM: It is an insult to give such a small amount to a cause that would need hundreds of millions of rands. Although the mineworkers have toiled, suffered and paid dearly with their lives to produce the wealth of this country, their reward is nothing short of failing to recognise that they are also human beings who have dependants.

NN: Do you think the government can help to minimise the impact of retrenchments?

JM: The present government will never do anything like that because it is well known that they have for decades it has prospered on the exploitation of the black masses. The more blacks suffer the more they are in a good position to dominate the political scene and remain in total control.

NN: What, in your view, is the solution to our economic ills?

JM: Total restructuring of the mining industry followed by nationalisation of the mines will go a step further in solving these ever-increasing problems.

## German miners shocked by SA mineworkers conditions

"Mineworkers unions all over the world demand the abolition of apartheid and they demand sanctions to bring about real change."

This was a clear message from German Miners Union (IGBE) representative comrade Hegel in his address to an NUM meeting recently held to bid them farewell.

Comrade Hegel and three others had visited South Africa as guests of the NUM for about a month.

Comrade Hegel told the meeting about the German miners support for the anti-apartheid struggle.

"Comrades, no country on earth is too far for us to be inclined to ignore violations of human and trade union rights.

"Our campaign 'Solidarity against apartheid' started in 1984. Photo exhibitions and special news sheets were produced.

"Youth clubs campaigned against loans from German banks for the apartheid regime, others printed T-shirts to be sold to raise money for a special fund", comrade Hegel said. German miners were determined to extend their struggle of solidarity to mineworkers in all countries which had to fight oppressive conditions like in South Africa.

Hegel expressed his shock at conditions under which mineworkers live. He said: "Our first week in South Africa showed us the dismal situation of people living in squatter camps in this country.

"On our visits we found many mineworkers suffering from miserable working conditions. These results in many comrades having accidents, being injured and even killed." He further told the meeting that such conditions could only be removed when all the people of this country realise equal rights.

"We want to see a new democratic, free and socially just South Africa. We as mineworkers unions are prepared to work hard for these aims", he concluded.



# FORWARD TO THE WORKERS CONGRESS!

The build up to the 7th National Congress of the Union kicked off with different branches holding their conferences to set the pace for regional congresses. The union has about 350 branches that are organised into 16 regions.

The branch conferences were preceded by the drafting of resolutions that were first debated at branch general meetings.

Once the branches finalised their resolutions, they were then forwarded to the regional office for inclusion in the consolidated list of resolutions to be presented to the regional congress.

These processes are signs of the seeds of democracy and mass participation by the membership in the shaping of their organisation.

It is a sign that despite all the negative influences stacked against workers and their organisations, there is a lot of enthusiasm and effort to practice democracy.

Democracy is not an abstract idea. We have to strive to effect democratic practices in the building of our organisation. The struggles that we engage in on a daily basis are the best tutors in democratic principles. Decisions and or resolutions that are taken without the active and conscious participation of the general membership, no matter how well-intentioned they may be, do not stand a chance of gaining mass popularity and support.

Resolutions that were debated and adopted at regional congresses reflect the mineworkers concern over the current socio-political crisis. This translates into an awareness and a consciousness about the level of political activity among the mineworkers.

At a political level, support for a Constituent Assembly and the establishment of an interim government is overwhelming.

One region, for example, argues that 'it is only through a Constituent Assembly that we can achieve a completely non-racial constitution'.

Two regions have called for the stepping down of the apartheid regime and ascertain that the issue of an interim government is non-negotiable.

Another resolution makes a call to the regime 'to legislate itself out of power and parliament so that it (the regime) can participate in the negotiating process not as a referee but as a player'.

Mineworkers still show full commitment to the retention of sanctions to pressure the regime to abolish apartheid.

"We the oppressed and underpaid workers of South Africa call on all countries to continue with sanctions until we tell them to stop. Those who are calling for the lifting of sanctions have no interest of those who suffer under the apartheid regime", says one of the draft resolutions.

Calls for the resignations of Vlok and Malan are made in the light of mass murders committed by vigilantes carrying the so-called



Retrenchments remain a major challenge to mineworkers.



A delegate makes a point at one of the regional congresses.

traditional weapons without fear of arrest. Mineworkers are determined to build ANC and SACP structures at all levels including the workplace.

"Every member of COSATU must be an organiser for the ANC/SACP alliance", states another resolution.

On negotiations with the apartheid regime, mineworkers caution against negotiations being conducted without proper mandates. One resolution confirms the mineworkers support for the negotiation process, but warns that 'such negotiations must serve to achieve the aims of democratic values'.

The resolution continues by stating that 'negotiations must not be conducted above the heads of the masses'.

## WORKPLACE PROBLEMS

Resolutions about work-related conditions

cover a wide range of issues.

Retrenchments remain the major challenge facing mineworkers this year.

One resolution states that 'the retrenchments of workers is not only as a result of the low gold price, but mainly due to mismanagement by mine bosses, poor long term planning and their short-sightedness in their obsession with the accumulation of super profits'.

It goes on to call on the Chamber of Mines 'to set aside a portion of its profits so that it can be invested in the sinking of new mines to create employment'.

Other key resolutions relate to the hostel system, production bonuses, deferred payments, repression in Bophuthatswana and the unification of Lesotho with a new non-racial South Africa.



# MODERN SLAUGHTER HOUSES: SOUTH AFRICAN MINES

The mining industry has become very notorious for killing mineworkers at a shocking rate.

In the first twenty days of this year, 30 mineworkers had been killed in accidents. Over 550 workers were injured in the same period.

Victims of mine accidents have since rocketed.

If this guillotine is not stopped there is a great possibility of losing 1000 miners this year.

In 1987 alone 753 mineworkers lost their lives in mine accidents and over 10 000 were injured.

The latest report from the Government Mining Engineer tabled in parliament shows that 675 workers died in mine accidents in 1990.

The Chamber of Mines (COM), the main employer of miners, was responsible for 602 deaths last year.

On average 10 000 mineworkers are hospitalised for more than two weeks each due

to accidents on the Chamber mines.

At this rate, one mineworker dies and 18 are seriously injured for each ton of gold they produce.

A mineworker who spends 20 years working underground risks being killed in 30 chances and half of his working time he is facing the danger of being permanently crippled.

What lies behind this carnage is the mine bosses' health and safety policy of maximum profits at all costs.

It is the known motto of the COM that mineworkers have to work in places even if they are not safe.

Instructions are loud and clear - work first and complain later - or else face dismissal.

All calls made by the NUM for a commission to look into mine safety have fallen on deaf ears.

Since 1963 no commission of inquiry was ever instituted.

Mineworkers are seen by the mine bosses as cheap tools which can be used without much

regard to their safety.

With hundreds of thousands of unemployed in the rural areas of South Africa and neighbouring countries, those who die can be easily replaced.

One captain of the mining industry put their policy crisply when he said: "You can't have an omelette without breaking the eggs."

For the mine bosses, the death of mineworkers at work is part of making profits.

The worst disasters to hit mineworkers are:

\* 1909 at Wits gold mine 152 workers were killed;

\* 1960 Coalbrook mine caved in killing 437 mineworkers;

\* 1969 at Buffelsfontein 60 mineworkers were killed;

\* 1983 at Hlobane coal mine 68 mineworkers were killed;

\* 1986 at Kinross gold mine near Secunda 177 died when a fire broke out underground

The major killers of workers are the rockbursts. Added to this, mineworkers face a

battery of killing agencies:

explosives, electrical shocks, machinery, trucks, tramways, falling materials and a host of others.

Rockbursts are regarded as unpreventable by mine bosses. Technological methods developed internationally to minimise casualties of such accidents are not used as these will reduce profits.

It was in line with this policy that the COM research budget was cut from the proposed R70 million to R40 million last year. Only about R30 million is budgetted for 1991.

As if all this was not enough, victims of mine accidents are dismissed on the recommendations of mine doctors.



Victims of mine accidents are dismissed on mine doctors recommendations.

## ANC calls for a Health Charter

The African National Congress, in a recently published document, calls on the people of South Africa to draw up a Health Charter expressing their wishes on a democratic health system.

The document, which advocates basic health principles, represents a radical departure from the current apartheid health care system.

In its preamble, the document declares:

\* that for people to be healthy, it is necessary that families have enough money for a decent life;

\* that workers should work in safe conditions that do not make them sick;

\* that people need decent family housing, clean water to drink, and enough food to eat.

The document further states that there must be decent toilet facilities and proper dis-

posal of rubbish.

It goes on to state that people's health will be improved when they have a reasonable standard of education, and when there are opportunities for rest and recreation.

The document also commits itself to, amongst others:

\* the promotion of good health;

\* the creation of a comprehensive National Health Service;

\* Intersectoral co-operation, that advocates a single Ministry of Health and Social Services that work in close co-operation with other relevant government departments;

\* Financing of health care which should be the responsibility of the government;

\* A national medicines policy;

\* Personnel policy to address racial and gender injustice in the training of health workers.

The government has failed to correct this appalling situation through legislation.

The current legislation is totally inadequate and biased against mineworkers. The Mines and Works Act fails to provide for union involvement in health and safety such as independent inspection rights, election of own safety representatives, rights to information and the establishment of bargaining forums.

As long as the Chamber of Mines and the government refuse to establish a national forum to address this appalling state of health and safety in the mining industry, the situation will never show any significant improvement.

The challenge facing mineworkers is to struggle for a complete overhaul of the present health and safety system in the mining industry. This is a national problem and has to be addressed by any democratic government with a progressive health policy.



# LET US BURY THE RACIST PARLIAMENT NOW!



The undying desire for a Constituent Assembly and an Interim government will continue to move millions of the oppressed to united mass action for people's power.

Since the unbanning of the ANC and other political organisations last year, the apartheid regime started its last journey to disintegration.

The struggling masses of South Africa scored a resounding victory in forcing the regime to enter into negotiations with the ANC in an attempt to find a peaceful resolution to the current political conflict.

At present talks about talks between the government and the ANC concerns the removal of obstacles that will clear the way for real constitutional negotiations to start. The fundamental question facing the oppressed is the drawing up of a democratic constitution that will replace the racist one currently in force. Such a mechanism is called a Constituent Assembly (CA).

Simply put, a CA is a body that debates and draws up a new constitution for a new order. It is elected on a non-racial, one person, one vote basis usually by the proportional representation electoral system. The idea of a CA was first practised in France over 200 years ago after the overthrow of a dictator King Louis XVI in the French Revolution.

A CA operates during the period of transition from an oppressive system of rule to a new democratic political order.

It is important to note that the CA has no power of making laws except that of making a new constitution.

After the completion of its task, the CA generally disbands: thus paving the way for national elections for a new government.

## Interim government

During the course of the drawing up of a new constitution by the CA, a temporary administrative machinery takes control of the army, the police, the broadcasting service and other major services of the decaying order.

Such a temporary administration is called an Interim government.

## April 30 deadline

The apartheid regime has until the 30th April to remove all obstacles in the way of constitutional negotiations to begin. Some of these obstacles are:

- \* the release of all political prisoners;
- \* the return of all exiles;
- \* the ending of all state-sponsored violence;
- \* the repeal of all repressive laws; and
- \* an end to all political trials and all executions.

The CA remains the only democratic option leading to a non-racial South Africa. At the core of it lies the democratic will of the people expressed in the content of the constitution.

Secondly, the majority political party has the democratic right to influence the shape and spirit of the new constitution.

It is in this spirit that the CA remains the most reliable and democratic mechanism to ensure the birth of a democratic South Africa.

All political parties with credible constituencies will have the right to participate in

the drafting of a new constitution.

It is no surprise that the apartheid regime, which has a proven history of ruling by sheer brute force and coercion, rejects the CA.

This rejection bears testimony to the democratic character of the people's demands for a CA and an Interim government.

The stark reality the regime has to face is that it never had, nor does it have, the right to rule our country. We have no alternative but to expose the Nationalist Party (NP) for the political fraud that it is.

This is a party that represents a tiny racist minority. Even amongst the white population, it represents a small fraction of the white electorate.

The historical truth is that the NP has no moral authority to govern the country. The delay of agreeing to the CA and Interim government can only prolong our long march to a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa.

The current violence sweeping our country is a desperate attempt by the regime to save itself from total destruction by people's power.

Untold suffering and harm is caused to whole communities with consequent hardening of attitudes towards each other, thereby bringing about a culture of hatred.

The undying desire for a CA and an interim government will continue to move millions of the oppressed to united mass action for people's power.

The road might be long and hard, but victory is certain.



## 26 000 Jobs saved at Harmony Gold Mine

The NUM's timely action prevented possible closure of Rand Mines' Harmony Gold Mine and thus saved 26 000 jobs.

Harmony management had cited rising operational costs and falling profits for the closure of the mine. During negotiations management claimed that production output dropped by 15 000 tons of ore. Labour unrest was said to be the main cause of the loss in production.

The union argued that the high incidents of labour unrest must be viewed against the background of anti-union management attitudes. The fact that the union had been engaged in a struggle to gain recognition since 1982 is clear evidence of this. Racial discrimination and harassment of workers were also cited as factors that contributed to instability on the mine.

At a mine level meeting management indicated their intention to develop a more co-operative relationship with the union.

It was against this background that the union proposed a code of conduct to regulate relations between management and workers. The management also agreed with

the union to have:

- \* a code of conduct
- \* full-time shaft stewards
- \* relationship by objective exercise
- \* new hostel arrangements and other matters that would improve the union's activities on the mine, and
- \* the establishment of a TASK FORCE consisting of 5 union representatives and 5 from management's side to deal with specific problems that might arise

### Racism

Thousands of workdays were lost due to protests against racial discrimination and through strikes in protest against the harassment of workers. Thousands more were lost when management closed shafts because of alleged sabotage and intimidation of supervisors.

The union told management that an agreed grievance procedure will have to be implemented. The union made this demand against the background of the existence of different and discriminatory procedures for black and white workers.

A stable labour climate can only be created

if the underlying tensions and problems were removed.

Since the inception of the union the bosses have made life extremely difficult for workers at the mine - they terminated membership, dismissed and deported worker leaders and retrenched without negotiating with the union.

Last year the mine retrenched 6 300 workers after announcing a profit loss of R11,6 million for the quarter ending in September. Another source of tension had been management policy of terminating union membership each time subscriptions are increased, thus eliminating the union from the mine.

It is not the mine's prerogative to set obstacles in the way of the implementation of higher membership fees. When the union raises subscription fees, there should be no requirement to fill in new stop order forms.

Notwithstanding what has been publicly said, Harmony Gold Mine has done little to eradicate racial discrimination. We have a responsibility to ensure that agreements reached with management are followed.

## Mooinooi workers get jobs back

Nearly 500 Mooinooi Chrome Mine workers are to get their jobs back after having been out of work since December 1990.

The workers were dismissed after a strike in which one worker was shot dead when the bosses called in the police. The workers were protesting against management's decision to introduce an identification card system without consulting them.

Negotiations between the union and the mine owners, Samancor, broke down and an arbitrator was called in. Agreement was reached on the 10th April to re-employ 456 workers with effect from the 29th April.

Ninety-five workers will however be retrenched out of the original 552 workers who were dismissed.

## Organiser's house bombed

Solly Rasmeni's house was bombed at 1.30 am on February 14th. Rasmeni is the union's organiser for the Klerksdorp region. The bomb caused extensive damage to comrade Rasmeni's house and shattered windows of neighbouring houses.

This is the second time in a year that comrade Rasmeni's house was bombed. Last year on February the 4th his house was bombed for the first time. Police at that stage said that they would investigate the bombing, but until now nothing has come out of that "investigation".

The NUM, in its statement after the bombing, condemned this blatant harassment on comrade Rasmeni. "This act of cowardice, carried out by agents of evil and destruction will not go unrecorded. The failure of the police to solve the first attack on comrade Rasmeni's house leaves us in no doubt that the perpetrators of this second attack will never be brought to book", the statement said.



## No pay, no blind shift - Finsch workers say

More than 1 200 De Beers Finsch Mine workers in Kimberley went on strike for thirteen (13) days against management's refusal to pay them for the 27th blind shift that they work every October.

The strike started on the 11th of February and was suspended on the 24th of February. A number of meetings were held between management and the union during the strike to try and resolve the dispute. Mediation was also tried but to no avail. All these efforts were not successful as management refused to pay the workers for this shift as from 1986.

Management argued that if they were to pay the workers at Finsch Mine for this blind shift, all the other workers in De Beers divisions would demand the same. The strike was suspended on the understanding that talks between management and the union will continue on this issue.

PLEASE WRITE

THE NUM NEWS IS YOUR NEWSPAPER!

WE NEED TO KNOW:

- \* WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE IN YOUR NEWSPAPER?
- \* WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR SHAFT, HOSTEL, BRANCH AND REGION?
- \* WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE COMMUNITY AROUND YOUR PLACE OF WORK?

DON'T JUST SIT THERE! TELL IT TO US. PUT IT DOWN ON PAPER AND POST IT TO YOUR NEWSPAPER!

THE ADDRESS IS:

NUM NEWS, P.O. BOX 2424  
JOHANNESBURG 2000



# We demand a Summit to decide the industry's future

The General Secretary of the NUM, Cyril Ramaphosa, outlines the state of the mining industry for the past two years, with special emphasis on the future role of all the parties in an industry that is gradually being decimated through retrenchments

South Africa of today has become the focal point of all progressive minded people here and abroad. The current socio-political changes taking place moves at a baffling speed.

Over three centuries of national and social enslavement has taught our people to resist and fight.

The whole history of our struggle is full of heroic battles our people waged in the face of almost insurmountable barriers.

It was sheer determination and tenacity of a people fighting for a just cause that all evil machinations of oppressors and exploiters came to nought.

Since its inception, almost a century ago, the mining industry has been the chamber where repressive and discriminatory laws were baked.

At the root of Chamber of Mines foundation lies the whole philosophy of common exploitation of human and economic resources of South Africa and beyond.

The mining industry has been structured basically for the extraction of raw materials to earn foreign exchange. At the base of this gross economic distortion is the use of cheap black labour, a policy still being pursued until this day.

## CURRENT SITUATION

It is against this background that mineworkers unions have been operating over the years.

The biggest challenge mineworkers have been facing since they were unionised is that of fighting double oppression.

At the core of all this all-powerful industry is the power of conglomerates. A few mining houses - Anglo American/De Beers, Gold Fields, Gencor, Rand Mines, JCI and AngloVaal control over 90% of South Af-

rica's mineral wealth.

This massive economic power permeates all major institutions including government. Mining policy has become the monopoly of this tiny minority of mineowners with consequent gross mismanagement of South Africa's economic resources.

Rampant exploitation prevailing in the mining industry is reflected in poor working conditions of black mineworkers, starvation wages, horrible health and safety standards and callous disregard of basic worker rights.

## REPRESSION

While the apartheid regime has finally admitted the failure of the policy of white supremacy, the situation is totally different on the mines.

Mineworkers are still herded into overcrowded single-sex hostels and compounds, totally unfit for human habitation. The semi-prison like conditions under which they live give mine bosses almost total control of their lives.

Racial discrimination still forms the basis of exploitation of labour.

The NUM has been fighting racial discrimination since its formation. Until this day the Chamber of Mines has not abolished discrimination based on race.

It is incumbent on mineworkers to formulate an ANTI-RACIAL DISCRIMINATION CHARTER to ensure that a real non-racial mining industry exists now and in future.

The mine regime still regards freedom of expression and association as totally inimical to the interests of the mining industry. We are still forced to use semi-underground methods to organise mineworkers into NUM.

We have the huge task of organising over 400 000 mineworkers under NUM despite all obstacles put in front of us. Union leaders and officials are still barred from entering mine premises.

Our success in organising mineworkers depends on the dismantling of all repressive structures that are typical of a state of emergency situation.

It is in this sense that mine repression becomes a national problem that needs efforts of all democratic forces of South Africa to eradicate.

## POVERTY WAGES

The success story of over one hundred years of COM rests on the poverty wages earned by black mineworkers.



Cyril Ramaphosa

per month while their white counterparts pocket R3 500 on average.

Compared with other industries, white miners are among the highly-paid section of the working people whereas black mineworkers are among the lowest paid.

Our wage policy of a national minimum wage for mineworkers of R600 and R543 per month underground and surface respectively.

With the rate of inflation consistently rocketing and the depressive state of gold mines the situation remains bleak.

Retrenchments have reached unmanageable proportions with about 80 000 mineworkers having lost their jobs since 1989. Mine bosses are already pleading poverty in an attempt to save production costs at the expense of mineworkers.

We are asked to accept starvation wages which are characteristic of the mining industry in the interest of the industry in crisis.

We refuse to be party to any suppression of wages that will condemn mineworkers to hunger and disease.

We are reaping the fruits of a hundred years of economic mismanagement of the mines. This strategic industry cannot be left in the hands of a few people pursuing their narrow selfish interests.

There can be no talk of getting out of the current economic and political quagmire without socio-economic transformation of our society.

Political supremacy remains fundamental in starting a process of addressing socio-economic ills of South Africa. It is under such circumstances that restructuring of the mining industry will be realised to the fullest.

Negotiations for retrenchments packages with mine bosses, though important, will remain palliatives as long as they are not linked with an overall national plan of creating jobs mainly from the place of origin of such victims.

The current crisis demands that a national solution be sought before a social volcano of unemployment erupts.

The convening of a MINING INDUSTRY SUMMIT of mineowners, mineworkers organisations and unions, labour federations and the Ministry of Mineral and Energy Affairs remains a priority.

This is the forum where a sound start can be made in shaping policies and principles that would come with solutions to mining problems.



Anger against retrenchments is rising daily

On average black mineworkers earn R500



# We sing of our struggles, victories and in praise of our heroes - JB Marks Choir

Somewhere in the mining town of Orange Free State, NUM members are singing praises about the gallant struggles that the working people have been waging since the beginning of oppression and exploitation.

Not only do they sing praises about the struggles against oppression and exploitation, they also sing of the joys, pleasures and light moments of victories registered during the course of that struggle.

When eight NUM members from the OFS region decided to start a choir in July of 1989 to express their feelings in song, they did not expect to end up with a group of almost 30 people that it is today.

The JB Marks Choir was spotted by NUM NEWS at the regions conference in March. They all looked radiant in their red and

black regalia with JB Marks' image emblazoned on their shirts.

Why JB Marks Choir? Why not Clements Kadalie Choir? Or Moses Mabhida Choir? What was so special about Marks that made the choir members to name it after him? We put these and other questions to the comrades in the choir.

"We admire JB Marks for his role in the organisation of black mineworkers, his teachings laid the foundation for the present day struggles."

The comrades also reminded NUM NEWS that comrade Marks was instrumental in the 1946 mineworkers strike that shook the mining bosses and the government of the day. Marks was also a leader of the African Mineworkers Union.

"It is our intention to present our message of

freedom to our fellow workers through song. At the same time, we want to express our disgust at the repressive methods that are still in force in the mines. JB Marks' determination to improve the mineworkers' conditions therefore remains one of our guiding motivations."

The comrades further told us that they meet twice a week for practices. "We work as a collective and the production of songs is a collective effort. We merge our ideas and tunes are then created. It takes some time as none of us is musically trained to compose or write music."

The major problem remains that of exposure and lack of resources. The choir always sings in meetings that are organised by the NUM and other COSATU affiliates around the Free State.



The JB Marks Choir doing it for their fellow workers at a COSATU rally in Welkom

## Stop the violence or talks are off - ANC warns government

The ANC has given the racist regime until May 9 to take drastic steps in an attempt to end the current violence.

Since the eruption of reactionary violence in Natal in 1984 almost 10 000 innocent people were butchered.

Last year alone 2 900 people were killed when the violence swept the Reef. This year about 600 people died in the same manner without any sign of effective on the side of the SAP and SADF.

Negotiations between the government and ANC have been put under severe strain by this senseless violence directed against peace-loving people of our country.

About the character of this violence, the ANC says: "The killings, maimings and beatings that have occurred have greatly influenced feelings of ethnic antagonism among various sections of the African people; have distracted public attention from the

root causes of poverty, hunger, deprivation and want in the country, and have rendered it more difficult to achieve united action among the African people for generally accepted and commendable goals."

In an open letter to the apartheid government the ANC put these demands:

- \* There should be no carrying of weapons - traditional or otherwise - at public gatherings;
- \* Removal from public office of Ministers Vlok and Malan, and the dismissals of all SADF and SAP personnel involved in CCB and other hit squads;
- \* All counter-insurgency units such as Koevoet, Askaris, Koevoet, etc should be publicly disbanded.
- \* All police personnel implicated in massacres such as at Sebokeng be suspended. Legal proceedings be instituted against them and an independent commission of enquiry

investigate the Daveyton and other massacres.

\* The SAP and SADF give assurances that they will use civilised methods of crowd control and that there will be no issuing of live ammunition on such occasions.

\* Effective measures to phase out the hostel system and labour compounds and begin providing proper family units and single occupancy flats.

\* An independent commission of enquiry be established to look into complaints of misconduct by the police and security forces. The letter concludes by giving the government until May 9 to meet these demands, failure of which shall force the ANC to:

- \* suspend any further discussion with the government on the All Party Congress
- \* suspend all exchanges with the government on the future constitution of our country.