

## HISTORIC MINERS' CONFERENCE

Southern Africa Mineworkers unite against multi-national corporations



SAMF leaders - SAMF general secretary Jeffrey Mutandare; vice president Charles Mbaoc; James Motlatse; president Paul Puritt; internal officer of Canadian Labour Conference and Chris Gilmour, CGIL International Representative.

A delegation of Southern African Miners' Federation (SAMF) will meet multi-national corporations operating in the region to discuss conditions of employment and restructuring of the mining industry. This decision was taken at a historic SAMF conference held in Johannesburg from October 30 - November 1, 1992.

Mining houses targeted are De Beers, Anglo American Corporation, Lonrho and Rio Tinto Zinc. In another important development SAMF decided to broaden the campaign for mineworkers' rights in the entire Southern Africa region.

Proposals on this campaign and the restructuring of the mining industry will be submitted to South African Development Community (SADC) Labour and mineral commissions. Conference took important resolutions which are likely to change the character of industrial relations in the region.

Under the theme - The Challenges of Change - Conference adopted tough resolutions to deal with mineworkers' problems in the region.

On limiting the power of multi-nationals conference resolved:

- \* To promote the establishment of indigenous mining companies. For this objective to be fulfilled, it is very necessary that governments and other organisations assist the indigenous people. This could be in the form of foreign currency, machinery and various other means.

- \* Embark on an intensive membership recruitment campaign to bring non member countries to SAMF. It is of importance that those unions that are not yet members of SAMF work even harder (with the help of SAMF), so that they recruit a significant (if not all) number of total work force in their respective countries. This would enable them to participate effectively in the activities of SAMF.

To combat poverty wage and poor pension schemes mineworkers resolved:

- \* To demand a uniform wage and the provision of pension schemes for all mineworkers in the region.

- \* To launch a united front by all SAMF affiliates to fight for a living wage that will keep pace with the inflation rate.

- \* To establish an information centre for the benefit of all affiliates in terms of exchange of ideas and information.

On health and safety conference resolved:

- \* To campaign for the formation of participatory health and safety committees.

- \* Campaign for health and safety commemoration day.

- \* Campaign to establishment Aids awareness programme to educate workers.

- \* Campaign for the publicity of accident statistics throughout the region. This should be done through the Documentation Centre.

Migrant labour system came under attack and a resolution was adopted to deal with this evil system:

- \* To campaign for establishment of labour exchange policies that benefit indigenous people and the workers themselves.

- \* The demolition of hostels and the construction of decent married people's homes.

Racial discrimination, it was noted, was still rampant in the mining industry.

Mineworkers resolved:

- \* To campaign for complete abolition of all vestiges of discriminatory practices throughout the region.

- \* To campaign for equal pay for equal jobs.

- \* To campaign against job reservation. This is still being practiced in South Africa, and it implies that wealth may never be redistributed, but a few whites would continue to harness it on behalf of their future grand children.

Conference addressed the mineral wealth of the region and adopted a resolution committing SAMF to ensuring that the people of the region as a whole share in this wealth. Mineral exploitation should involve indigenous industries and the government. In pursuance of the principle of affirmative action a women's committee will be established under the auspices of SAMF.

Conference delegates came from Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Swaziland, Namibia, Botswana and South Africa representing over 700 000 mineworkers. Opening address was delivered by SAMF president Cde James Motlatse, the present president of South African NUM.

## SWEDISH MINING UNION GOING FOR MERGER

The MIF affiliated Swedish miners' union, GRUV, has decided to seek a merger with the Swedish metalworkers' union because of declining membership.

The decision came after an intense debate among the 69 delegates at GRUV's 32nd congress in Skelefteaa, a mining town in Northern Sweden, on August 22-26. The merger question was one which had repeatedly come up in the past, to be formally rejected at the 1987 GRUV congress.

It had been put on the agenda of this year's congress only by close vote, as many delegates had initially pronounced themselves in favour of the subject being debated by an extraordinary congress following a general membership ballot. In the end, the merger plan won 60 per cent majority. Some delegates expressed bitter-

ness about the decision which will end 100 years of independent existence of their organisation.

But there was a recognition that the dramatically declining membership figures caused by the fall in the numbers of working miners in Sweden made drastic action inevitable. While in the fifties, more than 14 000 miners were involved in the extraction of iron, copper, lead, zinc, silver and nickel, their number has decreased to 4 480 and is expected to fall to 3 530 over the next five years. Consequently, total membership of the GRUV (including unemployment and retired miners) will decrease over the same period by over 20 per cent. The number of active miners will go down by 36 per cent, with only 59 per cent of GRUV members left who are actually working in a mine.

## RECOGNITION FOR O'KIEP WORKERS AT NAMAQUALAND

NUM and O'kiep Copper have signed a recognition agreement, bringing to an end a seven year fight for union rights at the company. The agreement was signed on September 10 in Nababeep but still has to be rectified by Gold Fields, the company's parent. This, however, is expected to be merely a formality. A Gold Fields spokesman said the agreement sought to make provision for the framework in which relationship between the company and NUM could be regulated and future negotiations be conducted. Meanwhile, the parties are engaged in wage negotiations in which management has offered a 7.5 per cent increase against workers' demand for 13 per cent. Workers at O'kiep said that it is not the end of the world, there is still much work to be done. NUM standpoint is that O'kiep bosses should not force their medical scheme on workers without proper consultation like they have been doing in the past. One worker said, "as long as O'kiep bosses are committed to such poverty wages, there is much more work to be accomplished. And the bosses must explain what became of the 1968 O'kiep benefit funds. They also use housing to promote division amongst the workers."

## Strike is looming at Phalaborwa Mining Company



Workers at Phalaborwa Mining Company have voted to take strike action in support of job security at the mine. Over 80 percent of the workers voted to strike on all three issues in dispute concerning hours of work in the mining operation, job evaluation and security contractors.

## GOVERNMENT TO BLAME

The union holds the Swedish government responsible for this downward trend, challenging its decision to wind up state prospecting of new mines and prohibit mining activities in undeveloped mountain areas now reserved for tourism. The representative of the governing right wing coalition, Borge Hornlund, was given a cool welcome. To make sure he got the message, a group of delegates left the congress hall during his speech. Sting Malm, the president of the national Swedish trade union organisation, the LO, and Birgitta Dahl of the Swedish Social Democrats, criticised the government for allowing unemployment to rise steeply. While the 5 per cent unemployment rate still ranks favourably compared to other

European countries, it represents a 100 per cent increase since last year.

The LO is preparing country wide anti-government demonstrations and has committed itself to continue protest actions until the present government is ousted.

The congress re-elected GRUV's national executive, including its president, Anders Stendalen, who is also the president of MIF International guests including the former secretary-general of South African mineworkers' union, the NUM, and now secretary general of the ANC, Cyril Ramaphosa, NUM acting secretary-general and assistant secretary-general, Kgalema Motlanthe general secretary, attends the congress. The MIF was represented by its general secretary Peter

Michalzik, its vice president James Motlatse, and its education officer Stig Blomquist.



Kgalema Motlanthe

On job evaluation workers demand that proper job evaluation be done on the remaining 10 jobs grading. Only 442 jobs out of the total 452 have been evaluated jointly by a committee of NUM and the company. Workers are opposed to the privatisation of the present security and its replacement by an outside security firm called Gray Security.

On hours of work, workers in the mining operation demand a 42 hours working week instead of 46 hours. All these issues were referred to the Conciliation Board and a deadlock was reached. As a last resort workers balloted for strike.

Despite management's campaign of intimidation prior to balloting an overwhelming majority voted to strike. Over 2 000 workers are affected. The strike can start any time, any day. NUM remains open to settling the dispute.