

# NATIONAL UNION OF MINEWORKERS NUM PRESIDENT SPEAKS ON THE HISTORY OF OPP

**NUM President, Cde. James Motlatsi has been visiting mineworkers to address them on burning issues affecting them. He raised key points in his speeches delivered at rallies and mass meetings at Vaal Reefs No. 8 Shaft, Hartbeesfontein, Buffelsfontein and Kloof.**

**Excerpts from the president's talk:**

Over hundred years of oppression and exploitation at the hands of mine bosses clubbed under the Chamber of Mines has condemned millions of people to poverty and squalor.

Mineworkers recruited from the whole of Southern African Region continue to produce the wealth to benefit a tiny white minority of multi-millionaires.

The division of rich and poor between whites and blacks remains too wide to be closed with slogans and prayers. As whites become richer, blacks become poorer with total worsening of their conditions of life.

For many years mineworkers were brutalised by conditions of work and poverty wages imposed on them by the mine bosses. The very existence of compounds is a reminder of the repressive character of the South African mining regime.

History has taught us that nothing remains the same. The major victories scored by NUM in improving mineworkers wages and conditions of work bear testimony to this historical fact.

Britain was once a might colonial power ruling hundreds of millions here in Africa and other countries, but today the situation has changed.

There was once Rhodesia ruled by Ian Smith who at one stage vowed in 1968 that majority rule will be over his dead body. Today Zimbabwe is a living reality which cannot be wished away whereas Ian Smith is still alive and kicking in his own home rather than grave.

**ON THE ROLE OF NUM**

NUM was born nine years ago and since then conditions of mineworkers have improved, though not to our satisfaction.

Through our Union we were able to restore dignity to mineworkers. You are able to challenge the might of mine bosses today because you know your rights as the working people.

The NUM is the school for all mineworkers to arm themselves with liberating ideas. It is also a weapon and shield of you all without which your enemies would overcome.

Unity of workers is indispensable if we are to make major gains in our struggle for higher wages, decent conditions of work and a democratic future.

We are under attack by the mine bosses who have declared war on payment of a living wage.

Low wages has become a new motto for mine bosses.

Whereas some gold mines are facing serious problems other sectors of the mining industry are still reaping massive profits without paying decent wages in return for the sweat and blood of mineworkers.

Today all sectors — diamond, coal, platinum, iron ore — are pleading poverty as workers are forced to accept starvation wages.

The bosses feel confident and strong against the power of workers to fight back. This arrogance is partly derived from the weakness of NUM in terms of membership on some mines.

**ON NON UNION MEMBERS — FREE RIDERS**

Non Union Members are key ammunition used by the bosses to continue their oppression and exploitation.



These are workers who benefit from the struggles waged by NUM members on their behalf. When you attend mass meetings, workshops, seminars and congresses to build your organisation these parasites are in the bar and sports fields.

When you leave your homes, in far away places like Transkei, Lesotho and Mozambique you claim that you want to work for your loved ones.

However, on arrival, you allow yourselves to be kept ignorant and poor by not joining the Union to fight for your rights. Such terrible ignorance has robbed thousands of families of mineworkers of monies due to them as benefits fought for and won by your union.

Until this day thousands of mineworkers do not know what benefits their families are entitled to in case of death, accident, retrenchment or dismissal.

Victims of these mishaps and hazards lose millions of rands due to lack of correct information and knowledge.

In the end, it is their families, children, parents and relatives who suffer. This makes a mockery of your claims of working for your loved ones. By not actively participating in union activities you become indirect enemies of your own families.

Year after year, unclaimed monies go into the coffers of the apartheid state, whereas the beneficiaries should be mineworkers families.

This was the case when 177 mineworkers were killed at Kinross in 1986. Out of the 172 blacks who died in the mine disaster, only 93 were NUM members. NUM took legal action against Genmin on behalf of those dead and a considerable amount of money was won.

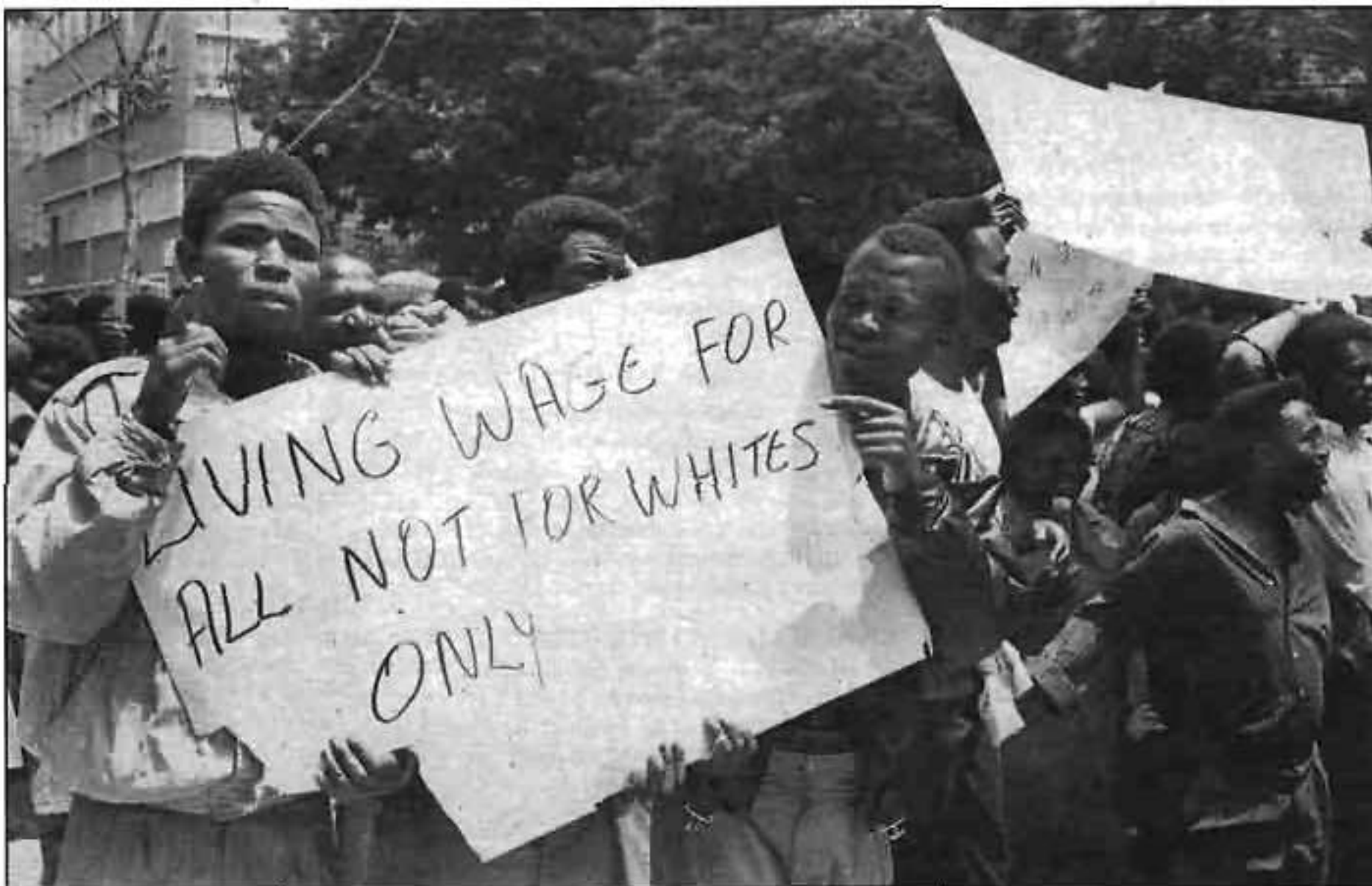
However, the most unfortunate thing is that through lack of knowledge on the part of relatives of deceased, NUM could only trace 40 families.

What about the plight of the 132 families who could also have benefited from NUM struggles had they joined the union or passed the information on their rights to their families.

Another glaring example of the suffering brought about by sheer ignorance is the payment of R2m by AAC to victims of mass dismissal during the 1987 strike.

The majority of former mineworkers from Mozambique could not be traced to claim their share of the R2m AAC paid to NUM until this day.

It is dangerous to think that your boss is your union. Bosses are only interested in your sweat and blood to make more money for themselves. When you are dead or injured they immediately forget you, let alone attending your funeral in Maseru or Umtata.



# NATIONAL UNION OF MINEWORKERS

# Cde. JAMES MOTLATSI OPPRESSION ON THE MINES

### ON NUM AND POLITICS

Our enemies are busy sowing divisions in our midst claiming that NUM is a political organisation. To try to weaken our union, NUM is made synonymous with ANC.

This campaign of lies, distortions and misinformation is currently being conducted throughout the entire mining industry. Closely related to this is the anti-union propaganda spread amongst you that joining the NUM is certain dismissal or retrenchment.

NUM is neither a political organisation nor a political party.

This is an organisation of workers formed to fight for the betterment of their conditions of work and wages.

However, we should not lose sight of the fact that laws made by white politicians control our lives here at work and in the broader apartheid South Africa.

Mineworkers are fully fledged human beings with interests in running their own lives. It is your right to decide how the whole country should be governed because unless you do so, laws will be passed against your own interests and you will have to obey them.

Rather than running away from NUM due to politics, you better run into the NUM and ANC to ensure that your rights are determined and shaped by no one but yourselves.

Apartheid oppression and the bosses' exploitation knows no nationality as long as you are classified black. When ANC comrades were attacked in Matola - Mozambique, Maseru - Lesotho and Botswana by SADF, nationals of those countries were also killed.

ANC has been dedicated to the freedom struggle since 1912 until today. If such freedom is not better than apartheid terror, then you have every reason not to join either NUM or ANC but FW de Klerk's National Party.

We accept the fact that the current political situation is ever changing. As a union with a history of democratic struggle we have a responsibility to make proper assessment of the whole situation so as to be able to play a critical role.

To deal with this situation NUM will be convening a Political Summit to chart our way forward in terms of future political developments in Southern Africa.

As of now yours is to go from here and enter each and every hostel room to spread the message of unity and freedom. Let every mineworker who really loves his family and people join ANC and its allies to ensure the defeat of F W de Klerk's government.

Let every mineworker who really loves his family and people join NUM now in preparation for battles still lying ahead.

