

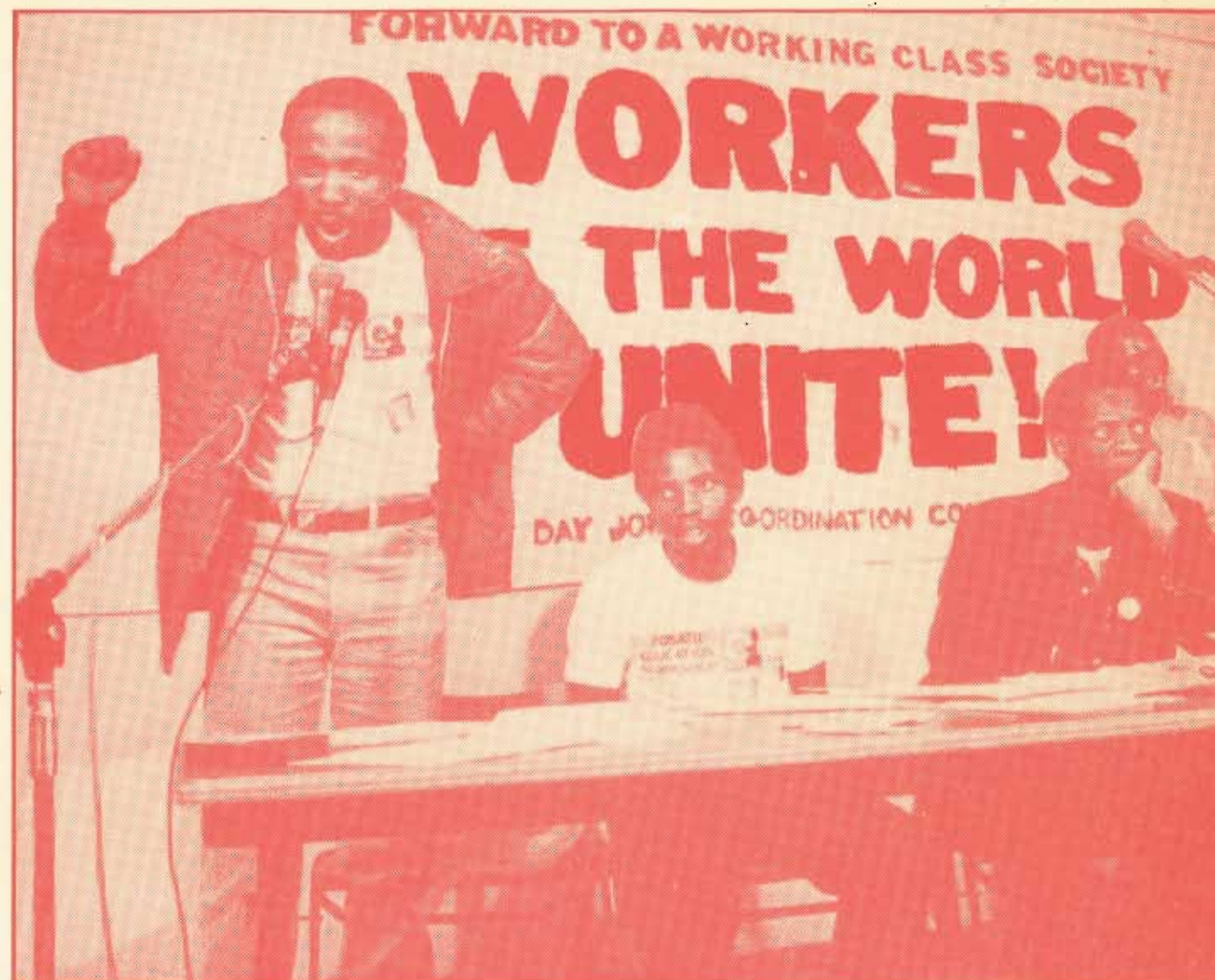
SOUTH AFRICAN WORKERS RALLY AROUND MAY DAY

South African workers have a long history of struggle around May Day. Like May Day struggles in other countries, these struggles have sometimes resulted in violent clashes between the workers and the capitalists and the governments which support the capitalists.

South Africa first saw May Day demonstrations in 1904. A group of socialists held a rally on Market square in Johannesburg and rallied the white workers. These demonstrations did not include black workers. African workers started involving themselves in May Day demonstrations in 1925. The ICU, led by Clements Kadalie, adopted this resolution in 1925:

“that the ICU should send fraternal greetings to, and recognise its solidarity with, workers of all lands. In particular it greets the victorious Republic of Russian workers, British miners and other workers who are faced with an attack on their conditions of life.”

From this time onwards, African workers become increasingly involved in May Day demonstrations. Most white workers also began to lose this militant tradition.



One of the most important May Day demonstrations was in 1950. In that year CNETU and other progressive organisations called for a Freedom day strike on May Day. The bosses and the Nationalist Government did their best to intimidate workers and they used the army to occupy the townships. Workers around the country refused to be intimidated and about six workers were killed as a result of police violence.

After a long silence which resulted from suppression of progressive organisations in the country workers began holding May Day demonstrations in the late 1970's. These struggles have grown in strength and many workers are now involved.



May Day march to Grand Parade, Cape Town



Police charge May Day demonstrations 1950.