

FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



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AT 4.30 pm on Monday June 27 the first legal strike for many years began at Natal Thread at Hammarsdale.

Nine days later the company acknowledged its defeat and negotiated a settlement with the National Union of Textile Workers.

The Natal Thread workers not only won a 15c an hour wage increase with back pay (a wage dispute had been the cause of the strike) but they also won the effective right to strike.

In South Africa, after going through lengthy legal procedures workers can go on a legal strike.

No dismissal

This means that they do not face criminal prosecution for striking but does not protect them from being fired by the company.

In terms of the Natal Thread victory, the company agreed that in a legal strike it would 'either dismiss all such strikers or none of them'.

It also agreed that 'in the event of the company having dismissed the strikers it would only either re-employ all of them or none of them'.

This agreement is similar to British labour law where workers have won legal protection for strikers.

This agreement protects strikers from dismissal because it is highly unlikely that a company would fire the entire factory as it would have to train a completely new workforce from scratch.

Also, if the company takes back one of the strikers, it has to take back them all.

First success

This makes the Natal Thread strike the first successful legal strike in recent labour history in South Africa.

The strike was marked by the solidarity and discipline of the 400 odd workers involved.

For five hours a day machines, which usually thudded all day long in the factory, were silent.

At 4.30 in the morning and afternoon, the shift workers closed down their machines.

The machines remained silent until the next shift arrived at 7 and then began the long process of starting machines designed to run continuously.

Understanding

NUTW branch secretary, Prof Sineke said although the day shift had not been involved in the strike, there had been sufficient understanding among the workers not to cause division.

Through the strike, Natal Thread lost a full week's production - costing the company thousands of Rands.

Fair bargaining

But the workers won a significant worker right - the right to strike without the fear of selective hiring or firing.

This is surely a step towards a better and fair collective bargaining system. Let us hope that more employers follow the lead set by Natal Thread.



The smile of a winner - Natal Thread workers.

THE RIGHT TO STRIKE

THE Natal Thread agreement marks another step toward winning an effective and legal right to strike for the workers of South Africa.

As we have seen over recent years workers will strike even when the law says it is illegal if they feel they have no other choice. However a strike is very costly for workers and the decision to strike is never an easy one.

Because the strike is such an important weapon of workers in the unequal struggle with employers they have also to fight to get legal protection. We want to change the moral right to strike into a legal right to strike as well.

This legal right to strike is important because it offers greater protection to strikers and allows them to use the strike weapon with more discipline and less risk of violence.

There are certain very important matters which together would create this legal right to strike. They are:

- The right to free and independent organisation
- Effective collective bargaining procedures that quickly resolve differences and disputes
- The right to picketing during a strike i.e. the right to persuade workers not to enter the gate
- The right and ability to pay strike pay
- Protection against dismissal during a strike.

In South Africa there are two reasons why we don't yet have this right. Firstly the Labour Relations Act procedures are so slow that they encourage 'illegal' strikes. Secondly even though the Labour Relations Act provides for legal strikes in which there can be picketing and strike pay other acts such as Internal Security and Intimidation are used to prevent these provisions being effective.

Despite this gains are made. The FOSATU type recognition agreements with shop stewards, and procedures for grievances, discipline, negotiations and disputes have improved the collective bargaining position of the unions.

The Natal Thread Agreement tackled the problem of dismissal. It is the usual practice of employers in illegal and legal strikes to dismiss all workers and then selectively reemploy those that they want back which usually excludes strong members and shop stewards.

The Agreement prevents such selective dismissal and re-employment during a legal strike so management now have a choice of dismissing all workers permanently or dismissing none.

This is not such an easy choice and gives workers a fighting chance in their struggle for a more equal balance of power in collective bargaining.

In the first legal strike for many years, Natal Thread workers won a significant worker right

Metal workers push for higher wages after IC sell out

METAL workers throughout the country are pushing for higher wages.

The wage settlement reached by 'sell out' unions and the employers' association, SEIFSA, on the Industrial Council has left them totally dissatisfied.

And the battleground has now moved from the Industrial Council to the factory floor as Metal and Allied Workers Union members push their employers to better the 'appalling' Industrial Council increases.

The Industrial Council settled on a 10c increase in spite of massive opposition from MAWU which said its members would not be satisfied with anything less than an across the board increase of R18 a week.

Over the past month the tension has been building up in many factories as employers refuse to remedy the low Industrial Council wage increase.

And already at three major Barlows factories, workers have downed tools in support of their wage demand.

The Barlows Shop Stewards Council agreed that they would push for an increase of 50c an hour — so with this they approached their employers.

The Barlows Manufacturing plant at Kew near Johannesburg and WB Camerons in Jacobs near Durban were the first factories to strike in support of wage demands.

At both factories, management refused to talk wages until recognition agreements had been signed with the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

Barlows' Fuchs plant at Alrode soon joined these two factories after their management also used an unsigned recognition agreement as an excuse not to negotiate wages.

Although, workers at all three factories eventually returned to work, they were clearly not satisfied with Barlows' 'delaying tactics'.

However, at Barlows Kew management added fuel to the discontent by firing 12 workers who, they claimed, had been beating up fellow workers during the strike.

But not all metal workers have been unsuccessful in their drive for higher wages.

Factory level negotiations have

led to increases at:

* APV Kestner (Pietermaritzburg) — 18 percent across the board.

* Pillar Naco (Pietermaritzburg) — 15 percent across the board.

* Glacier Bearings (Pinetown) R2 per hour and 16 percent across the board.

* Forbo Krommenie (Jacobs) minimum wage R2,42 and an across the board increase of 30 percent.

* CI Industries (Pinetown) — 25 percent across the board.

* Instep Components — minimum wages raised by 17 percent.

* Alusaf (Richards Bay) minimum wages raised to R1,58 per hour.

And a new wage agreement has been reached to cover four Henred Freuhauf factories — two in Natal and two in the

Transvaal.

This is the first time that a wage agreement has been signed covering an Isithebe factory — Isithebe is a 'border' industrial area near Mandini and well known for its 'poverty' wages.

Workers at the four factories will get a 19c an hour increase

backdated to July and will get a further 5c an hour increase in January.

In order to start closing the wage gap between the Isithebe factory and the others, the company agreed to a further 4c an hour in July and 3c in January for the Isithebe workers.

Shop steward chairman returns to Ponds

THE chairman of the shop stewards committee at Wadeville factory, Chesebrough Ponds, who was fired after the June 16 stay-away, has been taken back.

On June 16, workers at this Transvaal factory decided not to go to work in remembrance of the 1976 uprising.

However, after the stay-away management fired the shop stewards' chairman, Morgan Mathebula, for supposedly inciting workers to strike by announcing the stay-away on the public address system.

At this, workers stopped work in protest saying that the decision to stay-away had not been made by Brother Mathebula but had been made at a general meeting.

They said that management had told shop stewards that if workers do not work on June 16 they would lose a day's pay.

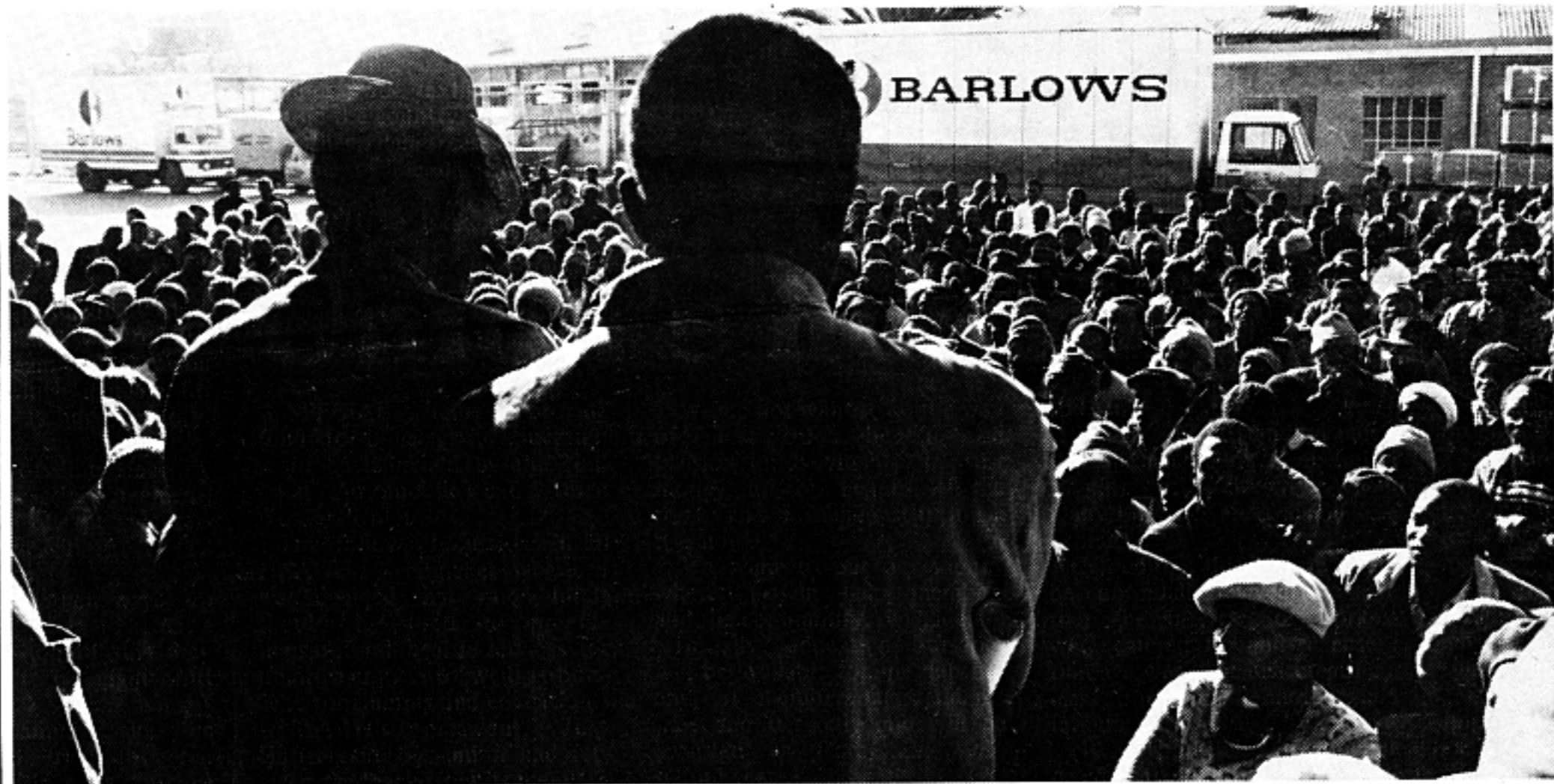
After the short stoppage workers returned to work in order to give shop stewards the chance to appeal against the decision to fire Brother Mathebula.

Appeals, negotiations with the union and mediation failed to resolve the dispute.

But the Chemical Workers Industrial Union said 'we will fight the case until the end of time if need be.'

'We cannot allow management to dismiss the chairman of the shop stewards committee when the workers themselves had taken the decision not to work on June 16,' the union said.

Finally, after further talks, management agreed that Brother Mathebula could return to work.



Shop stewards at Barlows' Fuchs plant report back to workers during their short stoppage. Workers at this meeting voted to return to work.

Mondi Paper backs down

THE Mondi Paper Company has backed down on its earlier refusal to start negotiating a recognition agreement covering its Merebank mill.

This follows what appears to be a clear attempt by Mondi to block the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union from representing its members at this mill near Durban.

Refused

Mondi had initially refused to negotiate an agreement saying it would first have to complete the recognition agreement presently being negotiated with PWAU to cover the Felixton mill.

In the meantime PWAU said senior management attempted to persuade members not to belong to the union.

'Indian members were told that Mondi was disappointed in them for joining the union.'

Jobs taken

And others were told that by joining a FOSATU union their jobs would eventually be taken by black workers as FOSATU unions were for blacks only.'

PWAU organiser, Pat Horn said.

'Some members were actually threatened that they would lose their jobs through having joined the union,' she added.

Resigned

However, in spite of these actions membership at the mill continued to grow and more than 900 workers have thus far joined the union.

About 70 of these have resigned from the SA Boilermakers Society to join PWAU.

A worker said 'the Boilermakers Union is an insurance union. We want a fighting union.'

Furious

At a meeting at the beginning of July, Mondi refused to recognise even an interim shop stewards committee and proposed that a new works council be elected.

PWAU members were furious at this and said they did not see why they had to wait for the Felixton agreement.

'We have had majority memb-

ership at the plant for two months. This is just blackmail,' they said.

The union decided that Mondi's actions amounted to an unfair labour practice and informed the company that if it did not open talks with PWAU

within two weeks it would take Mondi to the Industrial Court.

Minutes before this deadline was due to expire, Mondi informed the union that it would open recognition talks and would recognise the union's shop stewards.

TGWU signs first agreement with transport company

THE Transport and General Workers Union has signed its first agreement with a goods transport company.

The preliminary recognition agreement covers Freight Air and Freight Services Forwarding.

It is believed to be the first agreement signed between a goods transportation company and an independent union.

TGWU general secretary, Jane Barrett said they had been having a tough time with the 'hard headed' transport employers association.

'Particularly as it has used the parallel TUCSA union, the African Transport Union, as an excuse not to deal with TGWU. But we hope this agreement will open the way for more to follow.'

The TGWU has also been breaking new ground in the property industry.

It has signed an agreement with Anglo Property Services covering about 600 workers at various grand buildings around Johannesburg — including the giant Carlton Centre.

NAAWU slams employers' plan to 'erode' wages

THE National Automobile and Allied Workers Union has attacked the Eastern Province Automobile Employers' Association for its attempts to 'erode' workers' wages.

And in protest at the employers' measly offer of an increase of 5c on the bottom grade and 11c on the top grade, workers at all General Motors plants downed tools for fifteen minutes on July 29.

This action comes as once again the employers and NAAWU begin wage talks on an interim wage increase.

But the action of the employers is already driving the talks fast towards a deadlock.

Last year's wage talk deadlock led to a mass strike involving more than 10000 motor workers.

In terms of the agreement reached close to the end of last year, it was agreed that further wage talks would be held every six months to discuss an interim wage increase.

However, EPAMA has already tried to squeeze out of this by asking the union to defer wage talks until the last quarter of

the year 'in view of the economic downturn'.

NAAWU rejected this excuse outright and said that EPAMA's action was in breach of the agreement.

And eventually when the employers were hauled to the negotiating table by the union, they continued to 'plead poverty' and proposed that the wage adjustment only be made in December.

EPAMA said that if the union 'insisted' on wage increases from August 1, the employers could only offer 5c - 11c. This

amounts to only half of the cost of living increase over the last six months.

NAAWU said this was 'totally unacceptable' as the employers should at least meet the cost of living increase. This would mean an increase of 16c on the bottom grades to 34c on the top.

Regional secretary, Les Kettleas said workers' wages had already been hit by the fact that most of them were working short time.

'And now on top of this employers want to erode their wages,' he said.

The increase, if deferred, will undercut the workers' present wages by 5 percent and will save employers R1,7 million.

Brother Kettleas said this would not only effect motor workers but would have a dire effect on the whole Port Elizabeth area where this money would be spent on other products.

STOP PRESS: As we went to press, a meeting of all the shop stewards rejected the employers' offer and it was decided to call meetings of all the workers in order to get a mandate.

Union drive in P.E. gets 21 workers city rights

TWENTY-ONE contract workers at Timber Industries in Port Elizabeth have been given permanent city rights after an active union campaign in the factory.

This follows the historic Rikhotso judgement in which the highest court in the land ruled that migrant workers who had worked for one employer for more than 10 years had the right to Section 10 1(b).

Documents

Since the judgement many FOSATU unions have been pushing employers to assist in getting their contract workers urban rights.

At Timber Industries, Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union organiser, Lucky Dendile, asked the company to provide the names of the people who had worked for the company for more than 10 years and asked that it provide the documents necessary to apply for city rights.

Out of the 23 who applied, 21 were recently given their Section 10 1 (b) stamps.

Campaign

On a much larger scale, a similar campaign has been conducted by the National Union of Textile Workers at Mooi River Textiles in Natal.

There it appears that about 300 workers qualify for permanent rights.

The company has been asked to prepare the necessary documents and the union is presently awaiting the results of the applications to the Administration Board.

'Useless' union kicked out

IF you were a member of a union that for the past thirty years had done nothing for you. What would you do?

Kick it out? Well that's exactly what workers at Shatterproof at Port Elizabeth have done.

In an interview with FOSATU Worker News, the steering committee said they knew the Glass Workers Union was there, but they did not know what it was for.

'The workers have no say in the union. We don't even know how the office bearers are elected,' one worker said.

The steering committee said when the secretary of this TUCSA union came to the factory 'she comes to have a

cup of tea with management, not to talk to workers'.

'We see our dues being deducted but the union serves the interests of the company,' workers said.

One worker said the thousands of Rands of union dues which had been collected over the past thirty years by the Glass Workers Union 'has just gone down the drain'.

A worker who had been working in the factory for over ten years said he remembered the Glass union holding meetings in the early days but now workers only attended because they got a R2 transport allowance. And even with the allowance very few go.

'The Glass Workers Union has always worked hand in glove with management,' the workers said.

Now, however, the workers have joined the Chemical Workers Industrial Union and are actively involved in the affairs of the union.

Due to the overwhelming support of the CWIU at Shatterproof, the company has implemented stop orders, the election of shop stewards and is negotiating a recognition agreement with the union.

But the Eastern Province is not the only region where glass workers are turning to the CWIU.

In the Transvaal, two agree-

ments have been signed.

These agreements which give full rights to the CWIU - including plant based bargaining for wages and working conditions - have been signed with Plate Glass in Germiston and Shatterproof Safety Glass in Rosslyn.

These have all been completed since the Glass and Allied Workers Union merged with the CWIU.

Senior shop steward at Plate Glass, Ronald Mofokeng said 'we glass workers are now seeing the advantage of building broad based industrial unions and of pooling the resources of small unions to make one big union.'

Workers boycott overtime

WORKERS at two Duropenta factories - one in Natal and one in the Transvaal - are boycotting overtime and the canteen in protest at the company's low wage offer.

The company recently signed a significant recognition agreement with the Chemical Workers Industrial Union which gave the union plant level bargaining rights.

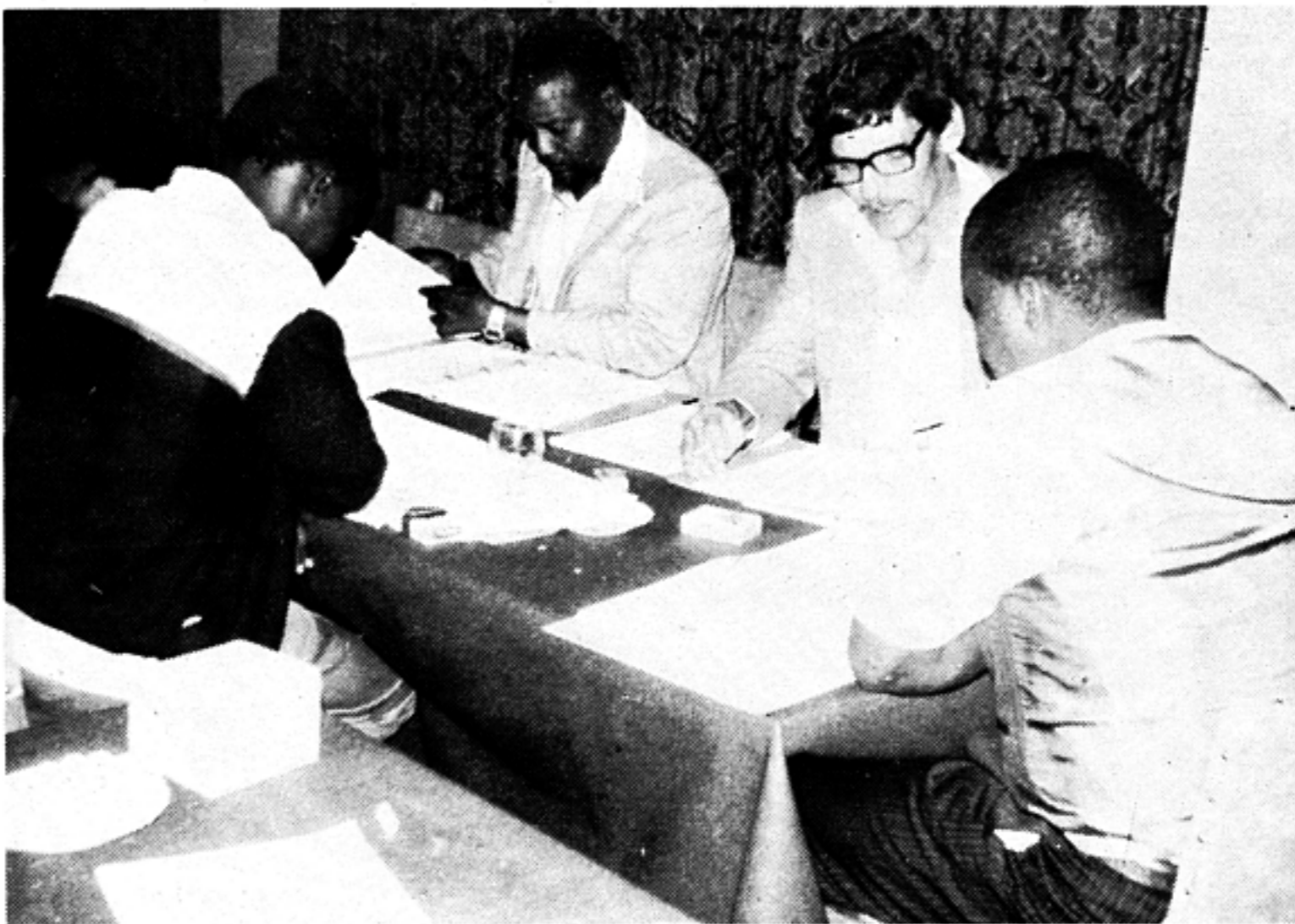
Plant level bargaining has been strongly opposed by the giant metal employers' association, SEIFSA - Duropenta's main employer body on the metal Industrial Council.

The new agreement with Duropenta is a national agreement which will be extended to all the other factories in the group as the CWIU gains membership.

At present it covers Duropenta factories in Roodekop and in New Germany.

Soon after the agreement was signed the union plunged into wage negotiations in order to improve the dismal increases granted at the recent Industrial Council negotiations.

However, wage talks deadlocked when workers rejected the company's offer of an R8,50 a week increase.



THE International Metalworkers Federation recently held a Health and Safety Conference in Port Elizabeth as part of its drive for a better working environment for workers.

Attending that conference which took the form of an instructor's course were four organisers and shop stewards from FOSATU unions.

The people who went were June Rose Nala (Metal and Allied Workers Union, N Natal), Justice Mnguni (Autoplastics,

Pretoria), Charles Satheke (Sigma, Pretoria) and Sidney Nyengane (CDA, East London).

The course was taken by Marchello Malentacchi, head of the IMF's Health and Safety department. He was assisted by FOSATU Eastern Province regional secretary, Les Kettleas.

The five day course covered all aspects of health and safety from noise and chemical hazards to the effects of bad lighting on the eyesight.

The IMF lays down five

objectives of health and safety work:

- * to find and define risks of industrial injury and risks to health at the workplace.
- * to analyse and determine the nature of the risks, how they effect the worker and what safety measures need to be taken.
- * to correct the situation, introduce improvements.
- * to follow up - check that the

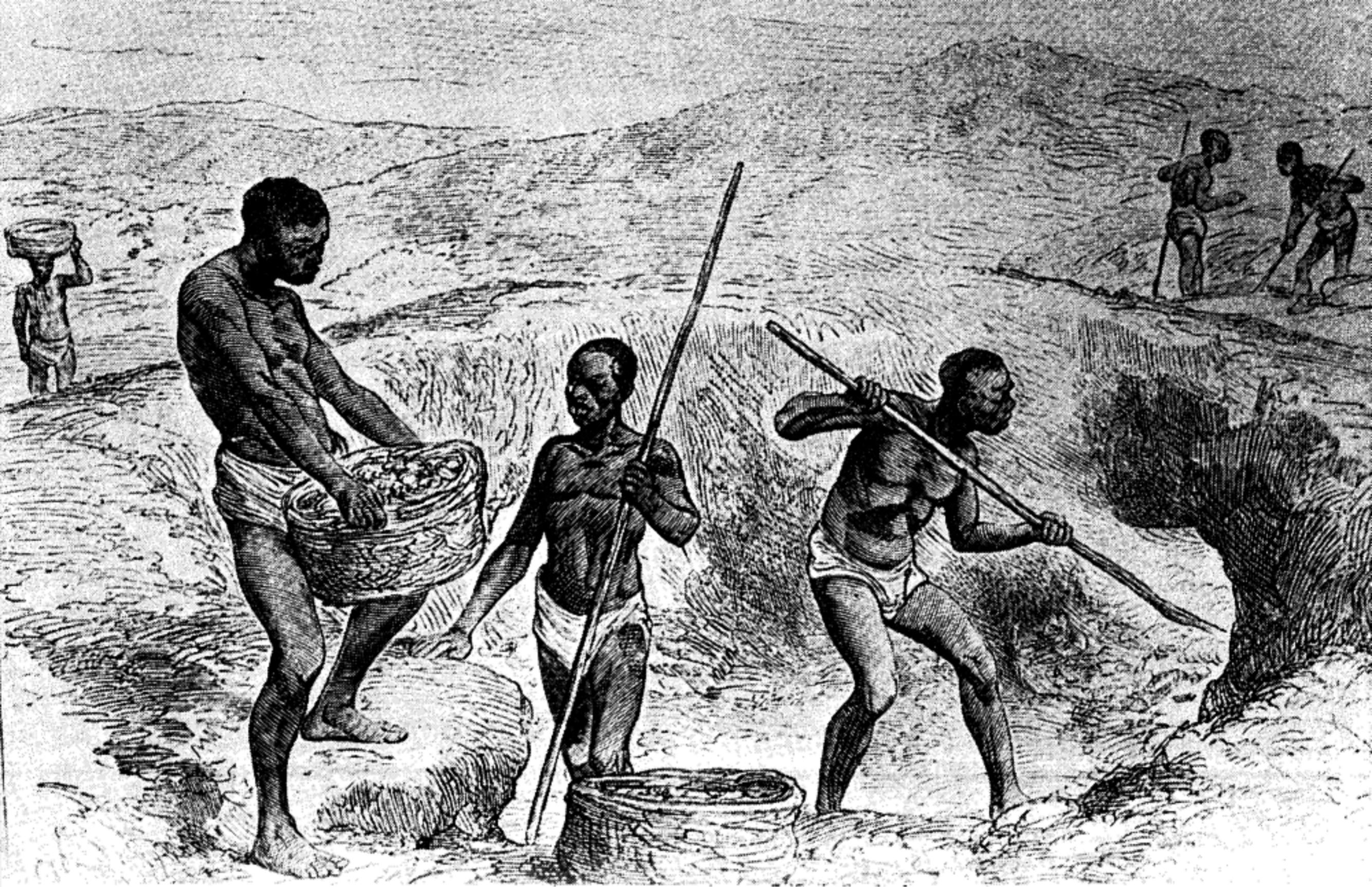
Workers learn all there is to know about health and safety

AFTER each session, the delegates broke into groups. Here are some of them going through the IMF manual.

measures have been properly carried out and have had the intended effect.

* to check and ensure that no new risks have been introduced into the working environment.

However, the IMF adds that many of the problems associated with working life will remain unsolved if there is not a strong and active trade union organisation at the workplace which can protect the interests of workers.



The making of the WORKING CLASSES

People have always worked in South Africa from the beginning of human history. They had to work in order to survive. When graduates dig in the ground to find the remains of old villages and old societies, they find buried there grinding stones, hoes, bones of cows from fifteen hundred years ago (about 500 A.D.). These show that people were working in the fields and with their cattle as far back as we can see. But people from those days were not workers in the way we think of workers today. Some individuals had privilege and lived off the labour of others (for example, the chiefs) but everybody in these early times had a right to land or could rear cattle or could hunt game in the veld

and by these means he or she could live. This meant that for most of the time they worked for themselves or their families, and not for somebody else.

When we see workers today we see exactly the opposite. They have no land; they have no property from which to earn a living. They have to work for a wage so that they and their families can survive. They have to work for someone else who owns property and who wishes to make a profit from their labour – an employer who will pay them a wage either in the factories or the mines or the shops or the farms.

Because all these workers are in similar positions

and share certain interests – for example, they want more money than the employer will give – they are sometimes called the working class. This distinguishes them from the employer class who wish to make as much profit as they can and so don't want wages to rise very high.

How did workers and employers come to South Africa?

The story begins in 1652 when the first Dutch settlement was established in Cape Town. The settlement was run by a company the Dutch East India Company. The company imported slaves into South Africa to work on the farms and when the descendants of these slaves were eventually freed

IN this new eight page FOSATU Worker News we begin a serial on 'The Making of the Working Class in South Africa'. The story starts in the Cape in the eighteenth century (that is the years 1700 to 1800) where the 'coloured' working class was born.

In later issues we will examine the development of the African and the white working class and look at their struggles not only in the farms, or the mines, or the factories but also in the townships.

The serial shows us that the struggle has been a long one, and that the working class has taken a long time to be fully formed. It also shows that while the struggle has suffered many setbacks it has always recovered and gone forward to higher levels, so that workers in South Africa today have more strength than ever before.

An old Hottentot told us that he remembered the time when the Boers were all within a June day's journey of Cape Town and the country was full of Hottentot kraals; but they have gradually been driven up the country to make room for the white people.'

Why did the Khoi allow this to happen?...

Some thought it was easier to 'freak away' - in some cases as far as Namibia. Others attacked their brothers, which weakened the Khoi even more. But others fought back in a fierce guerilla resistance. Raiding bands attacked the white frontier. Between 1786 - 1795 in one district (Graaff - Reinet) 19 000 cattle and 84 000 sheep were carried away from the settlers. In 1790 one raiding party was reported to be 1 000 strong. In the same period 2500 Khoi and 'Bushmen' were killed. It was a bitter fight which held up the advance of the white farmers for many years.

But gradually the Khoi were ground down, particularly when the Dutch and the British government sent in professional armies to help the frontier Boers. When this happened all the free land was gradually taken from the Khoi. Their only alternative now was to work for the farmers, and their condition was hardly different from that of a slave.

Governor Janssens wrote in 1803: 'On my journey many Hottentots presented themselves with bitter complaints, not about thrashings or nakedness - such things seem no longer worth complaining about but about the withholding of children or cattle and even about the murder of relatives...the cruelties practised against the Hottentots ... everything that can be imagined.'

The conditions under which the Khoi worked were so bad that in the end they rebelled. The farmers were already at war with the Xhosa; now the Khoi joined the Xhosa in 1794 bringing with them horses and guns (the farmers had trained the Khoi to fight so that they would bear the casualties in war against the Bushmen and Xhosa). The white farmers were horrified. The British governor spoke of them being 'terrified at even a single shot from a Hottentot' and within a few months dozens of white farms were deserted.

Klaas Stuurman, the rebel leader stated the rebel's aims in the following words:

'Restore the country of which our forefathers were despoiled by the Dutch.. and we have nothing more to ask.'

The revolt continued till 1802 but eventually failed. The reason again was disunity.

Firstly the British split the Khoi/Xhosa alliance by allowing the Xhosa to keep an important part of the land that the white farmers had wanted to take for themselves. So the Xhosa accepted peace.

Secondly, some Khoi leaders including Stuurman were bought off by grants of farms.

Thirdly, many of the rebels thought that the British would be less hard masters and would support the Khoi against the farmers and in particular give them land.

This was mistake, which has been made many times since. The British had no intention of restoring the wealth and property of the Khoi. All they wanted was to prevent future revolts. With this idea they made regulations which protected the Khoi against the worst treatment that they had previously received, but which still left them with property and confirmed that they would forever be a part of the working class.

The next section of the serial describes how this happened.

**SEE NEXT
MONTH'S FWN**

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cattle and were obliged to proceed to the furthest living Dutchman in order to earn some cattle, and to rob their own countrymen. With what they obtained they fled to the mountains...(but) now they possess very little.'

Fifty years later a government official reported something similar about the Khoi near Fish River:

'All these Hottentots who (previously) were rich in cattle are now entirely destitute (destitute means deprived or poor). Some of them have been killed and some are scattered through wars with each other and with Caffers.... They (now) live like Bushmen from stealing, hunting and eating anything eatable which they find in the field or along the shore.'

If this was common, then there was little that was 'free' in the trading of cattle. The 'free' market had to wait until the population was dispossessed and had no property, no independence, no bargaining power. Of course, it was possible for the Khoi to resist, but this meant that they had to unite. And for much of the time they attacked or robbed each other and so weakened themselves even more.

A similar story can be told about land. It was not until a law called Ordinance 50 was passed in 1828 that 'Hottentots and other free persons of colour' were clearly allowed to buy land. By then, of course, they had no money with which to buy it.

By then, too, they had been dispossessed of what they owned.

A missionary, John Campbell, described what had happened when he visited the north western Cape in 1813. There he found a Khoi village at which he had wanted to stay. He could not because:

'They had no water for man nor beast...They had once a better place, but a boer (had) asked permission first to sow a little corn.... (and) they allowed it; after this he applied to government for a grant of the whole place which (was) promised.... and they were driven from it.

over 100 years later, they became an important part of the 'coloured' working class especially in the Western Cape.

But most of the 'coloured' working class trace their origins to the Khoi (called Hottentots by the whites because they could not understand their language). Very few slaves were to be found outside the Cape Town / Stellenbosch area (7% in 1773). It was therefore to the Khoi that the farmers looked when they were looking for labour, until eventually practically all of the Khoi had been changed into the 'coloured' working class.

How did this happen?

The answer is simple. The Khoi lost their cattle and their land. How did that happen? Here people disagree. Some historians argue that the Khoi willingly sold their cattle for 'beads, tobacco and intoxicating liquors like brandy.' And because the Khoi lived off their cattle (they did not cultivate the land) they had to go and work on the farms. This is the explanation usually found in the books we read in the schools.

It seems strange that people should so recklessly throw away their livelihood in this way. And when we look more closely it becomes clear that they often did not. One sign of this is that the prices paid to the Khoi by the white settlement in Cape Town for sheep and cattle were lower than those paid 40 years earlier.

This is the opposite to what you would expect of a free market, because in 1700 the Khoi had less cattle than before. So with the shortage that existed the prices should have risen.

This has made some historians suspect that unfair pressure was involved. And when they looked closer they found descriptions like these.

One visitor to a Khoi village reported: 'I asked them how it came that they had so few cattle. They answered that a certain freeman named drunken Gerrit, had a few years ago, in the company of some others, arrived at their kraals, and without saying anything had fired upon them from all sides setting fire to their houses and taking away their cattle..... In that way they lost all their



A Khoi village across the bay from Cape Town (Pictures courtesy of Africana library Wits University)

B & S to face union bashing charges

THE Metal and Allied Workers Union has asked the Industrial Court to order that B & S Steel Furniture Company take back the 249 workers they dismissed ten months ago and to pay them R850 000 in back pay.

This is the biggest back pay claim to ever come before the Industrial Court.

However, the Brits workers certainly deserve it.

Paper union strikes another blow against Typo's closed shop in secret ballot victory at Kohler Corrugated

NINETY-FOUR percent of the workers at Kohler Corrugate — a cardboard box factory in Brakpan — have rejected the TUCSA SA Typographical Union in a recent secret ballot held at the factory.

All these workers showed their overwhelming support for the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union in spite of a closed shop in the industry which forces them to belong to the TUCSA union.

The ballot strikes a further blow against SATU who recently had to give up three Nampak factories where workers also joined PWAU.

Earlier, Kohler had sneaked in a ballot at which PWAU was not present.

In this ballot workers had also overwhelmingly voted in favour of PWAU but the company had contested the results saying there was 'extreme intimidation' by the union.

Sure of its support, the union agreed that another ballot could be held at which both PWAU officials and SATU officials were present.

The results were exactly the same as the previous ballot.

Hopefully, the company can now believe that their workers want to be represented by the PWAU.

However, their still remains one stumbling block.

Kohler has to get an exemption from the Industrial Council, on which SATU sits, in order to allow workers to belong to the PWAU.

It is possible that SATU might still try to block the PWAU.

PWAU called on SATU to concede defeat and allow any worker which wishes to resign from the union to do so.

A PWAU official said the union was on the verge of winning a majority at a number of other factories covered by SATU's 'criminal' closed shop.

Highest paid in the industry

THE Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union has recently negotiated a starting rate of R81 a week for workers at Meadow Feeds in Pietermaritzburg.

This makes Meadow Feeds' workers the highest paid in the milling industry.

SFAWU organiser, Jay Naidoo said the union was fast approaching majority membership in the milling industry.

'By next year we hope to unify wages in the industry centred around FOSATU's demand for a living wage,' he said.



The B & S workers' committee which has played a key role in keeping all the workers united for so long.

For the past ten months they have faced tremendous hardships.

But they have refused to give up and have met every day since September last year.

Now, finally the company will have to face up to the charges the workers are bringing against it.

Papers submitted to the court by MAWU tell of the ways B&S management 'victimised' union members.

Spies

The papers say that soon after the union started recruiting in the factory, two members of the shop stewards committee were called into the managing director's office and told that he wanted to use them as spies for him.

'He told them that the identities (names) of those having any dealings with the union should be given to him and they would be kicked out of the factory.'

Fools

'The union, he continued, was no good for the workers; he did not want it in his factory; they must forget about the union, it was no good; they were fools because the union did not pay them; he wanted to use them to get rid of the rotten potatoes in his factory,' the papers say.

The papers say that management continued to 'erode the influence of the union'.

Workers were told not to join the union 'because people who joined the union would not go far with the factory'.

They were repeatedly told that the union would never work in the factory and that management was going to 'drive the union from the factory'.

One of the older workers recalls in the papers that a supervisor told him that his children would starve if he followed the union.

On September 8 1982, after dismissing the shop stewards committee, the company announced that it was paying off the entire workforce but said workers could come two days later to apply for re-employment.

Loyal

The 249 workers have resisted selective re-employment and have remained loyal to the union.

German worker support in Franz Falke dispute

THE German Textile Union (IG Textil-Bekleidung), which has over a quarter of a million members, has agreed to support the National Union of Textile Workers in its dispute with Franz Falke Textiles.

This follows a recent meeting in Dusseldorf between the general secretary of FOSATU, Joe Foster, and the international secretary of the German union.

Franz Falke Textiles has a factory in Bellville in the Western Cape but its head office is in Germany where it has five factories.

Force

Although, the majority of the workers at the factory joined the NUTW last year, the company has gone out of its way to force workers to form a works committee.

In a report given to Textil-Bekleidung, NUTW said that only five days before they were supposed to have had a meeting with the company in April management held a referendum to find out whether workers wanted a works committee.

Undermine

'The workers refused to take part in this and the majority of them placed blank pages back into the ballot box.'

'Workers told the union that they regarded this as an attempt by management to undermine their decision to become unionised,' the report said.

But management did not stop at this.

Workers said that in meetings at the factory, management had said that the company would only give increases in wages and improve working conditions through the works committee and not through the union.

The management then called workers in one by one into the office and pressurised them to

resign from the union.

The international secretary of the German textile union at the meeting in Dusseldorf agreed to take up the matter with the German head office of Franz Falke.

In the meantime, the NUTW is taking legal action against the Bellville company.

Workers demand a share of 'the rain' which falls at Suncrush even during the drought

SHOP stewards at Suncrush, a Richards Bay cool-drink factory, recently had a novel answer to their bosses' excuse that they could not pay wage increases because of the drought.

They replied that it was raining in the factory.

And then went out to prove it in order to support their drive for higher wage increases.

The shop stewards' investigation revealed that during the night shift more than 15000 crates of litre bottles of cool-drink were loaded — these were sold at R4,56 a crate.

It seems that even in a drought people were thirsty, shop stewards said.

As a result of their arguments, management agreed to pay the

workers an average increase of 18 percent — this will mean that workers on the lowest grade will get a R10 increase on their weekly wage.

At the beginning of wage talks management had only been prepared to offer a 10 percent increase on the lowest grades.

Brother Tom Mkhwanazi, Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union organiser for the Northern Natal region, said although workers had accepted the increase, they were not entirely happy with it.

'They will continue to push for a R2 an hour minimum when they meet with the company in December,' he added.

Union takes employers to court

THE Jewellers and Goldsmiths Union is taking their employers' association to the Industrial Court in a bid to block the deskilling of workers and the bringing in of cheap labour.

Since 1958, the JGU has had an agreement with the employers which protected the standards of artisanship in this highly skilled industry.

The agreement requires that employers give proper training to workers who will eventually become journeymen.

However, with the introduction of mass production in the industry, employers are trying to argue that they do not need apprentices anymore.

JGU general secretary, Ted Frazer said the union had decided to 'dig our heels in' at this vindictive action by the employers.

Starvation wages not acceptable

SOUTH African employers must learn that the days of paying starvation wages are over.

This is the message from FOSATU's president, Chris Dlamini, who was part of the negotiating team which won an amazingly high increase for workers at Isando factory, Simba Quix.

In terms of the recently completed wage agreement, the majority of the workers at the factory will get a 112 percent increase.

This will push their wages up from R45 a week to R85 a week and on top of this they will get a R15,63 night shift allowance.

Brother Dlamini said the company had tried to resist paying a high increase 'but we told them that they must pay for the previous years when they had been exploiting workers'.

Hammarisdale worker gets R109 for life

Brown Lung pay out

THE National Union of Textile's Brown Lung campaign is beginning to pay off.

The union has been informed that John Hlela, a Hammarisdale textile worker, will be paid a compensation of R109 a month for the rest of his life.

And because his claim was made in April last year, he will also receive a back pay sum of over R1 000.

The Bureau for Occupational Diseases has accepted that Brother Hlela is 70 percent disabled because of Brown Lung — a disease caused by cotton dust.

It is believed that Brother Hlela is the first black worker in South Africa to be paid compensation for Brown Lung since it was declared a scheduled disease in 1972.

Overseas hundreds of claims are made every year for workers suffering from Brown Lung but in South Africa very few have been made.

The NUTW is trying to remedy this and over the past two years has been conducting intensive Brown Lung campaigns in a number of textile factories around the country.

Brother Hlela's case is a good example of the dangers of the disease.

In 1971 he took a job as a

machine operator in the spinning department at Natal Thread in Hammarisdale.

By 1975, he said, he began to feel tightness in his chest and sometimes became very short of breath.

At times this was so bad that

he would collapse in the factory and have to be taken outside to get his breath.

By 1981, when the union began organising in the factory, his illness was so bad that he was having difficulty in managing a full days work.



John Hlela

Union's housing scheme

A SPECIAL scheme to provide funds for housing and education is to be launched by the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union.

This follows discussions in all NAAWU's branches where it was decided that union funds should be used to provide housing and health services for union members as well as bursaries for training and education.

NAAWU's president, Jury Harris said the union had received feedback from its membership that money currently in the union's benefit fund should be fed into these important areas.

'We do not want to go the way of most other benefit and pension funds which just invest money to the benefit of the bosses and financial institutions,' he said.

'We want to put our money where it will help members and the community,' he added.

Initially, education bursaries will be available for the dependants of members in standards nine and ten only and will be awarded as from the 1984 school year.

Brother Harris said the union believed that busaries were needed most in standards nine

and ten.

'At the end of standard ten, a student can go on to technical training or university where many bursaries are available,' he explained.

He said that this scheme would be continually revived to ensure that the interests of workers were catered for and to ensure that we were not just creating a class to exploit the mothers and fathers.

NAAWU has also in principle decided to use its benefit funds to assist members in getting houses.

In doing this the union is

Shortly after this the company fired him.

He is 33 years old and has three children to support.

The NUTW had just begun to prepare its Brown Lung campaign and Brother Hlela was taken as a test case.

He was tested by a union doctor and found to have Brown Lung and claims were put in for him to the Bureau for Occupational Diseases.

Since then thousands of workers have been tested for Brown Lung and the NUTW has put in claims for 6 workers at Mooi River Textiles (Natal), 2 workers at Industex (E Cape) and for a worker at Braitex in the Transvaal.

Recently the union tested 400 workers in the spinning department at David Whiteheads at Tongaat — the spinning department is the dustiest part of a textile factory and where a worker is more likely to get Brown Lung.

NUTW's National Executive Committee has started to formulate demands for hazard pay for workers working in dusty areas.

These will relate to the levels of cotton dust and will serve as an incentive for textile firms to keep down their dust levels in the factory.

following the lead of many other progressive unions overseas.

In countries like Holland, for example, almost half of the housing in the country is provided by the trade union movement.

Full details of this project still have to worked out and reported to members.

To do this a committee consisting of one representative from each NAAWU area, assisted by the secretariat, has been mandated to work out the specific details and how best to implement the scheme.

Rising worker interest in Unity

THERE is a growing interest among workers in the present moves towards trade union unity. At this meeting more than 300 workers gathered at FOSATU's Germiston offices to discuss 'The History of the Labour Movement in South Africa in relation to Unity'. At the meeting FOSATU's president, Chris Dlamini, reported back on the recent meeting of the feasibility committee — this was formed after the April Unity meeting in order to discuss the details of forming a new federation. The feasibility committee met in Cape Town at the beginning of July where the structures and policies of a federation were discussed. Another meeting will be held in October.

Hundreds flock to FOSATU events



University.

About 300 people came to listen to workers give their views and the debate that went on after these talks was very interesting. FOSATU Worker News at some later stage hopes to carry these talks.

But the highlight of the two week Winter School programme organised by FOSATU was July 16.

More than 500 people danced, sang and shouted slogans in Wits' Great Hall in a day devoted to worker culture.

This was not a day to forget about the worker struggle. But a day when the workers carried the struggle into the area of culture.

The afternoon began with a choir of women workers from Autoplastics in Pretoria.

The women workers sang songs familiar to most FOSATU members. The audience was so eager to participate in the singing that when the choir asked for some male voices, just about the whole audience wanted to get up on the stage.

In the end, it looked like the workers in the audience became the choir as they sang and danced along with the Autoplastics' workers.

After things had settled down the Dunlop workers who had come up from

Durban to put on their play showed how they had put the play together.

This was followed by a talk by National Union of Textile Workers' organiser Bangi Solo on Marabi Dance — a book by Dikobe where he describes the experience of workers.

Brother Solo through the book showed how the 1913 Land Act forced Africans to find work in the cities.

The next act in the worker culture programme was the Junction Avenue Theatre Company who sang songs from their previous plays.

They sang both serious and funny songs which were really enjoyed by the worker audience.

But the highlight of the day was the Dunlop play where workers acted out their experiences in the factory.

The play begins with the all too familiar 25 year service award, moves on to a number of events in the past like the Cato Manor riots and in the last section deals with the struggle for the recognition of the Metal and Allied Workers Union in the factory.

Well, it appears that everybody had a good time at the Worker Culture Day so it is understandable that FOSATU will be holding a similar event next year.

So if you didn't make it this year try next year.

IT was July 16. Bus loads of people began arriving on the campus of the University of the Witwatersrand.

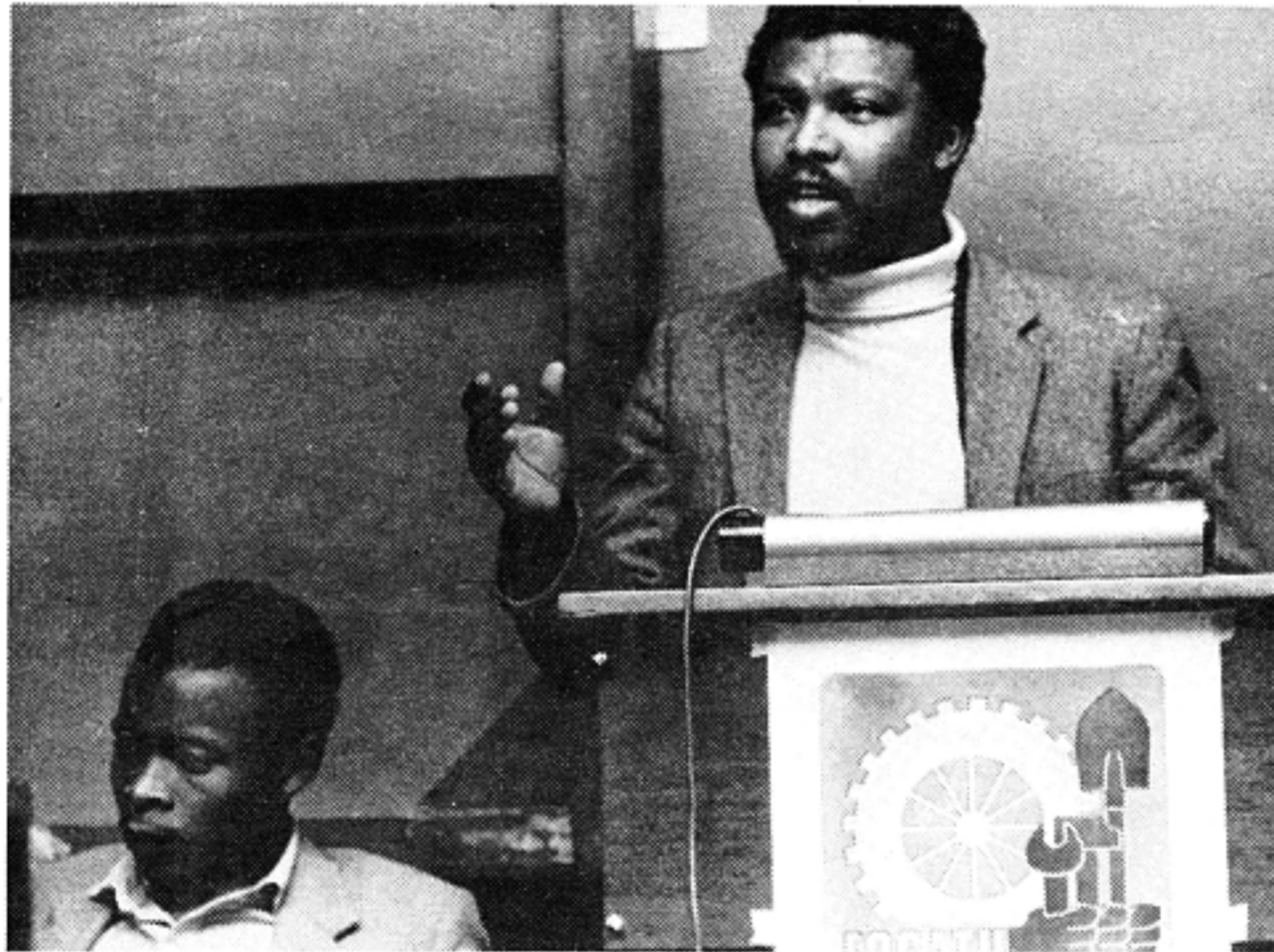
A campus which is usually

full of students but for this day the workers of FOSATU took over.

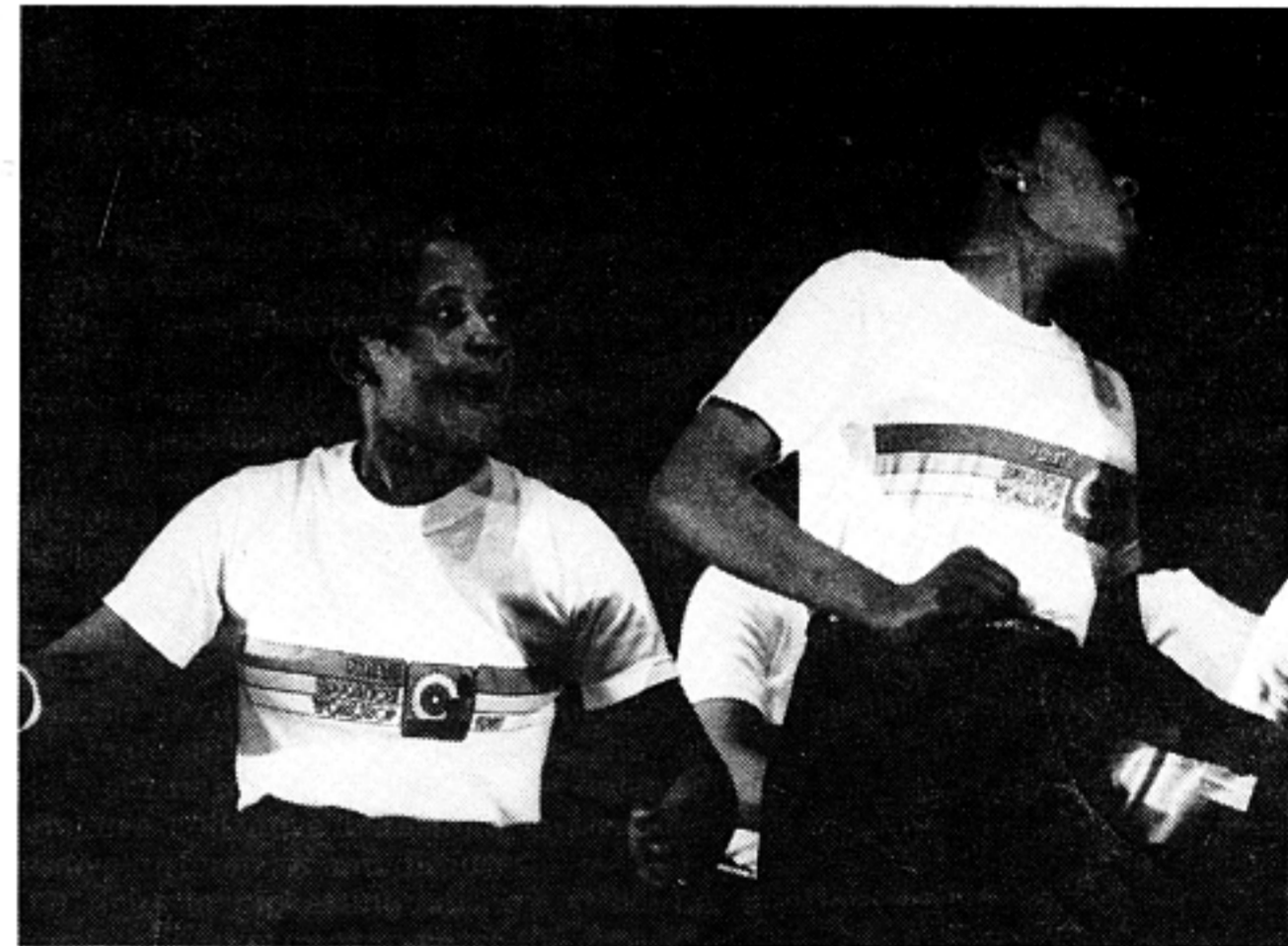
Prior to this a number of

worker groups from the federation had given talks on topics like 'Workers and Democracy' or 'Workers and the Community' at Wits

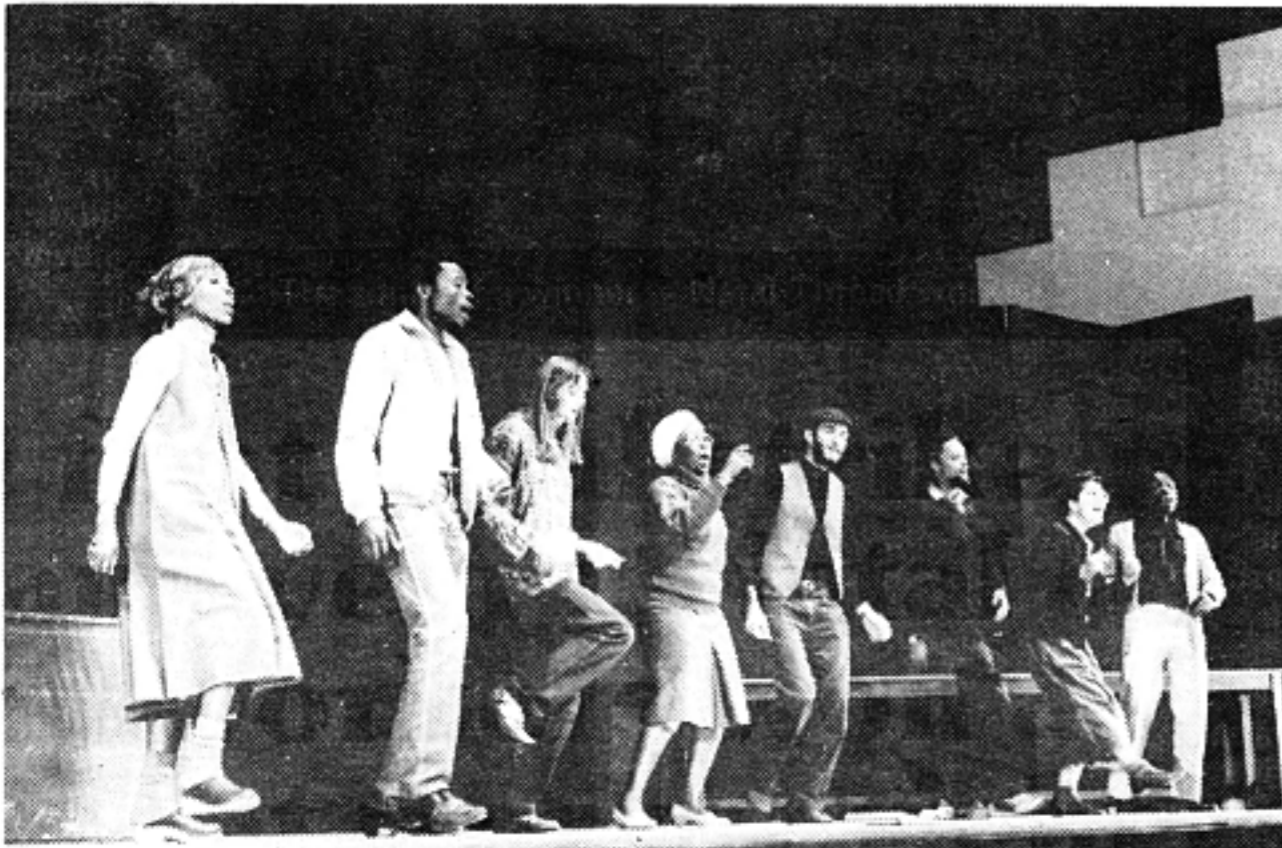
WORKERS ON THE MARCH



THE Pinetown group give their talk on the role of shop stewards



DANCING and singing — two of the members of the Pretoria choir.



THE much enjoyed Junction Avenue Theatre Company.



THE 'Ja Baas' supervisor — a scene from the Dunlop play.