

FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



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THE settlement signed between the Chemical Workers Industrial Union and Sasol will surely go down as a milestone in South African labour history.

Not only has the union managed to get 70 percent of the 6 000 workers who were sacked for participating in the November stayaway taken back, it has also won new rights.

It is remarkable that CWIU even survived this attempt by a semi-state company to crush worker organisation, let alone come out of it with better worker rights.

Stewards recognised

The most important of these is the formal recognition of CWIU shop stewards who now have the right to represent workers and report back to them during working hours.

The shop stewards also have the right to hold a monthly caucus meeting during working hours and have access to telephones — an important right in plants the size of Sasol.

'Previously there was a lot of conflict in the Sasol plants between the elected worker representatives who were attempting to act like shop stewards and line management who were trying to stop them,' said CWIU general secretary, Rod Crompton.

The union has also been given 'unlimited' access to the Sasol hostels together with a full time office in the hostels. Before, the union only had an office for three days a week.

The settlement follows months of negotiations between CWIU and Sasol.

In order to get the com-

pany to the negotiating table to discuss the reinstatement of the 6 000 sacked workers, the union launched a national and international campaign.

All the unions involved in the present unity talks committed themselves to a national strike in solidarity with the Sasol workers.

And in the demonstrations against apartheid in the United States of America, one of the demands has been for the reinstatement of the Sasol workers. American unions have also taken up the issue individually.

On March 2 at a CWIU Congress, attended by all the union's shop stewards, it was decided to move the campaign on to a different footing by accepting the company's settlement offer.

'The settlement does not mean we have given up on the rest of the Sasol workers who have not been taken back,' said Rod Crompton.

'We have just decided to rather continue the campaign from within the plants,' he added.

'Management has agreed in principle to hire a further five percent and have said that the door is not closed on the other 25 percent,' he said.

Rebuilding organisation

At present, the union is concentrating on rebuilding worker organisation within the Sasol II and III plants.

A joint management/union negotiating committee has been established in order to negotiate other aspects of recognition which are not covered by the settlement agreement. And over the next week or two, union members will be put back on stop orders.



Over two hundred CWIU shop stewards attended the special congress called to discuss Sasol

A MILESTONE!



Motor merger slammed

THE Ford closure in Port Elizabeth clearly reveals that multinationals have absolutely no interest in the welfare of workers and their communities in the countries where they operate.

This was said by the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union in a scathing attack on Ford for its decision to close down the Ford Neave Plant and the Amcar Truck Plant which is likely to affect about 2 000 workers.

The plant closures which are to take place over the next eighteen months is a result of the merger of Ford and Amcar to form Samcor (South African Motor Corporation).

'It is clear that this action by Ford is not in the interest of the workers but is merely another attack on them,' the union said.

The communities of Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage were already 'reeling' under the effects of high unemployment and the serious recession, it added.

NAAWU said that Ford already had a notorious record for plant closures worldwide.

'In Europe workers are fighting against such closures and have demanded that all matters affecting their lives should be negotiated and decided with them.'

'Not as Ford has done in Port Elizabeth, where it just decided without any consultation to

close the Neave plant and then it told the workers that it was being done in their interest,' the union added.

'The company has deliberately denied us the right to have a say or express our views on our future and that of our children. We are nothing to Ford. Their machines are more precious to them than we who are flesh and blood and living beings,' said Freddie Mosquin, a worker with 28 year's service at Ford.

In its proposals to the company, NAAWU has demanded that workers affected by the rationalisation of production 'be assured of placement' in other positions within the Ford/Anglo American Companies with assistance for re-location if transferred to another area.

The union has demanded that the period for the phasing out of production at the Neave Plant be 'extended to overlap with the upswing in the economy'.

It has asked that all workers aged 50 and over with 20 year's service be retired with normal pension benefits.

And finally, the union has demanded that Ford workers be offered the chance to leave 'voluntarily' with two month's wages for each completed year of service, refund of own as well as employer's pension fund contributions, full service leave pay and assistance for retraining.

International pressure is a challenge to apartheid, says union vice-president



NAAWU vice-president, John Gomomo

NATIONAL Automobile and Allied Workers Union vice-president, John Gomomo, during a recent visit to the United States urged Americans to continue to demonstrate against the racist policies of the South African government.

Speaking at a church service in Detroit, which is the heart of the American car industry, Brother Gomomo said that international pressure was a means of challenging apartheid's racism.

Referring to the American anti-apartheid demonstrations, Brother Gomomo said: 'Black and white Americans should continue what they are doing'.

He said that the anti-apartheid demonstrations had heartened apartheid opponents in South Africa and also surprised them, because they had thought that the American protest movement had died or grown impotent.

He added that these demonstrations had begun to pay dividends by focusing the spotlight on the South African government, forcing it to explain its indefensible policies to the world.

'The goal of my union and other opponents of apartheid is an end to all apartheid laws and the establishment of a constitution that protects people irrespective of sex, colour or creed,' Brother Gomomo said.

Brother Gomomo went to the United States to meet with leaders and shop stewards of the United Auto Workers.

During his visit, Brother Gomomo joined American demonstrators outside the South African embassy.

LP shows its true colours

The Labour Party has once again shown its true colours by accusing worker leaders of inciting the student boycott in the Uitenhage area.

In fact the boycott was directly the result of the Labour Party's efforts to set up an opposition sports body to the non-racial Uitenhage Sports Board.

The Uitenhage Sports Board has 18 affiliated sport organisations and for the past 23-years has been agitating for better sports facilities for the Uitenhage communities.

However, on January 21, the Labour Party controlled, CMC, called a meeting in order to set up a rival sports body. The

meeting was attended by three high school principals.

This sparked off a boycott at John Walton and Uitenhage high schools which has since spread to the rest of the Uitenhage high schools and to a number of Port Elizabeth schools.

The students are demanding that their schools commit themselves in writing to the non-racial policies of the South African Council of Sports (SACOS).

Since the beginning of the boycott the students have been continually harassed by the Security Branch to such an extent that many have been forced to

stay away from home. A number of the students have also been detained.

And on February 18, the police brutally attacked protesting students outside Uitenhage high school. Twenty-one received medical treatment, a number of whom will bear permanent scars.

The Labour Party's response to the boycott has been to close Uitenhage and John Walton high schools 'indefinitely' and to transfer three teachers, two of whom are Uitenhage Sports Board leaders, to schools in Walvis Bay.

In press statements, Labour

Party leader, Rev Allan Hendrickse, has said that the school unrest was an 'orchestrated' campaign against his party by SACOS.

He has also accused National Automobile and Allied Workers Union office bearers of being behind the unrest.

This is not the first time that the Labour Party has attacked FOSATU unions. In the past, Hendrickse has criticised NAAWU's 'living wage campaign' and the union's involvement in the 1982 motor strikes.

Meanwhile, ten worker committees from FOSATU factories in Uitenhage and seven committees from Port Elizabeth

factories have called on 'the police and politicians' to leave educational matters in the hands of the teachers, students and parents 'who are fully capable of handling the situation'.

The committees condemned the planned transfer of the three teachers and warned that this 'punitive action' would be strongly opposed by FOSATU.

They have also called for the opening of the two high schools, for the unconditional readmission of all students, for the removal of the two high principals, and for the setting up of democratically elected Student Representative Committees.

Renault steward released after four-month detention

RENAULT shop steward, Jerry Kau, was released on February 13 after four months in detention under South Africa's security legislation.

Brother Kau, who is an executive council member of the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union, was arrested by police at his factory on October 4 last year.

He has not been charged but has been warned that he may be needed as a witness in a future, unspecified trial.

Brother Kau's detention sparked off a major campaign for his release which included a demonstration stoppage at a Johannesburg factory where some of his union comrades worked.

The International Metalworkers Federation and the CFDT, a French union confederation which has members at Renault, also campaigned for his release.

In a press release, NAAWU

general secretary, Fred Sauls said that Brother Kau's sudden release without being charged 'merely confirms the arbitrary, unjust and totalitarian nature of security legislation'.

'NAAWU once more calls for the release of all those detained under such legislation and for the repeal of laws which are often used in attempts to intimidate trade unions and their representatives,' Brother Sauls said.

Toyota agreement

BY July workers at Toyota will have the highest minimum wage of all the country's motor assembly plants as a result of recent wage talks between the company and the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union.

The wage agreement initially raised the minimum wage from R2,65 to R2,83 per hour.

But workers will get at least another 17c across-the-board increase in July which will bring the minimum wage up to R3 per hour—which is close to NAAWU's living wage demand

of R3,50.

These wage talks were the union's first since it signed an interim recognition agreement with Toyota in June last year.

The recognition agreement, as well as giving the usual stop order and access rights, also laid down retrenchment benefits of five day's wages for each completed year of service and increased the annual leave from 12 to 15 days.

The union also negotiated a service attendance allowance which ranges from 2c to 4c per hour depending on length of service.

German unionist visits Transvaal Alloys



IG Chemie's Dieter Honerhoff (centre) with the German Labour Attache, Peter Michalzte (left) and MAWU Witbank organiser, Frank Boshelo (right) at Transvaal Alloys

A WORKER representative on the board of directors of Nord-Deutsche Affinerie, a German-based multinational, recently came out to South Africa to investigate the anti-union activities of the company's local subsidiary, Transvaal Alloys.

Last year the Metal and Allied Workers Union laid complaints with both the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the European Economic Community (EEC) after Transvaal Alloys dismissed 200 union members at its vanadium plant at Middelburg.

In the lengthy document outlining the union's dispute, MAWU accused the company of paying starvation wages, assaulting workers, showing no concern for workers' health and safety, and denying workers basic trade union rights.

On hearing of the dispute, the German chemical union (IG Chemie), which represents workers at the multinational's head office, decided to send Dieter Honerhoff to assist MAWU.

Brother Honerhoff, an IG Chemie official, sits on the

Nord-Deutsche Affinerie's Supervisory Board as a representative of the company's workers.

The Supervisory Board functions much like a Board of Directors except that it consists of representatives of both workers and company shareholders.

On February 19, Brother Honerhoff joined a MAWU delegation in negotiations with Transvaal Alloys management.

According to a MAWU organiser who was present at the talks, the company agreed to improve everything 'in the future', including dealing with the union, but it was not prepared to take back or even compensate the sacked workers.

This refusal to consider the 200 sacked union members is completely unacceptable, the organiser said.

'We made some suggestions to the company which Dieter Honerhoff will be reporting back to IG Chemie and to the Supervisory Board,' he added.

Meanwhile, the German government is also investigating the Transvaal Alloys dispute as a result of the complaint being lodged with the EEC.

Breakthrough at Dorbyl

THE giant Dorbyl group, which has been hit by a number of strikes over retrenchment, has backed down on its refusal to negotiate severance pay at factory-level.

This significant shift of policy has been greeted by unions as a 'major breakthrough'.

Towards the end of last year, workers at Dorbyl subsidiary, Wispeco, held a sit-in strike for six weeks when management refused to discuss severance pay with the Metal and Allied Workers Union for 81 workers it had laid off.

To make matters worse, shortly after the strike was called off, the company announced that it intended to lay off a further 109 workers. For the time being, MAWU has managed to block this.

MAWU branch secretary, Geoff Schreiner said the union had discovered that Wispeco was not retrenching the workers but was intending to make them redundant.

He said the company planned to shift some of its operations to Johannesburg.

'We believe that to put workers out of jobs without a very large compensation is immoral and something we cannot accept,' he added.

MAWU has demanded that Wispeco supply the union with information so that it can be established whether it is in fact necessary to lay off these workers.

Meanwhile, MAWU is not the only union which has been battling against Dorbyl's unfair retrenchment policy.

The General Workers Union launched a court case against the company when it laid off a worker at its Bellville marine plant without consulting the union.

Cedric Petersen, a welder at Dorbyl Marine, was only told he was being retrenched the day before it was due to happen.

The industrial court ordered

the temporary reinstatement of Brother Petersen and criticised Dorbyl for not giving sufficient warning and for not discussing the retrenchment with the GWU.

The court backed the union's argument that fair retrenchment could only take place when there was meaningful consultation between the company, the worker and the union.

The GWU has now applied to the court for the permanent reinstatement of Cedric Petersen.

It would appear as if the court case and the various retrenchment strikes persuaded the Dorbyl Group to change its retrenchment policy.

In the meantime, the GWU and MAWU have decided to join forces by forming a national shop stewards council for the Dorbyl Group which will be launched early in March in Johannesburg.

CG Smith provident fund

IN 1981 during a wave of strikes which virtually paralysed the Natal sugar industry and quickly spread to other industries, thousands upon thousands of workers resigned from company pension schemes.

Although, the strikes were sparked off by the government's plan to 'freeze' pensions, many other worker grievances were raised when company pension schemes were put under the spotlight.

Since then most FOSATU unions have held seminars and discussions on the issue of pensions and a number of pension fund rules have been renegotiated.

Early in 1984 worker members of the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union at CG Smith, a major Natal sugar company, decided to push for the setting up of a new provident fund.

Unlike the previous pension

funds, the rules of the new provident fund were drawn up in negotiations with worker representatives.

As a SFAWU shop steward who was involved in the negotiations put it: 'This is our scheme. It has not been imposed on us like the pension scheme.'

'The management of the fund is in the hands of the eight trustees, of which four will be elected by us.'

'For the first time we have equal say in the running of the benefit scheme. We can say that we the workers have won a great victory,' he added.

The new fund goes a long way in removing the workers' problems with pension funds and is, therefore, better able to meet their needs.

In terms of the provident fund's rules, CG Smith workers can choose between having benefits paid out in a lump sum

or in installments.

Workers are entitled to part of the company's contribution irrespective of the reasons for leaving employment — the amount depends on length of service.

In the case of retrenchment, the fund pays out an extra sum of money based on a worker's length of service. Also, workers can take out building loans from the fund.

The retirement age has been reduced to 55 with the worker having the option of retiring anytime between 55 and 65-years.

Death benefits include three years' wages for death by natural causes and six years' wages for death at anytime by accidental causes.

And the fund pays out up to R1 000 funeral benefits for the death of a worker, his wife, children or direct dependants.

R15 000 paid to sacked Dunlop workers

THE long-standing dispute between the Metal and Allied Workers Union and Dunlop which led to a strike by 2 000 workers at four factories in October last year has finally been settled.

On February 13, the company agreed to pay R15 000 to four workers who were dismissed in October 1983.

The Dunlop workers went on strike when the company refused to refer the dismissals to the industrial court or to an independent arbitrator.

The strike was watched closely by a number of British unions who have membership in Dunlop factories in England.

After the return to work, new talks were held on the

dismissals at which it was decided to call in Prof Blackie Swart as an advisory mediator.

Prof Swart found that the four employees had indeed been unfairly dismissed.

All of the sacked workers chose to take financial repayment for their wrongful dismissal rather than reinstatement as they feared that the company would victimise them.

In a press statement released after the settlement, MAWU said it hoped that Dunlop would now begin to improve its industrial relations practices which had been 'extremely unsatisfactory' in the past and had provoked 'immense worker frustration and anger'.

Barlows company refuses to discuss retrenchments with shop stewards

FOR the second time SA Traction Manufacturing at Germiston has refused to negotiate retrenchments with the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

SA Traction is jointly owned by the Barlows Group and by British multinational, GEC. In Britain the GEC is well known for being anti-union.

A MAWU organiser said management even refused to allow union shop stewards to attend the meeting about the retrenchments.

'And while the meeting was going on, management sent instructions to the foreman to start retrenching,' the organiser said.

'The company refused to discuss severance pay or retrenchment procedures with us.'

And when we asked them to tell us how they would re-employ the retrenched workers when the situation improved, they just refused to say, which makes us very suspicious,' the organiser said.

He said that during the previous retrenchment SA Traction had laid off 70 workers, of these 55 were union members.

'The company has consistently taken an anti-union position. For nearly three years SA Traction delayed recognising the union and tried to force members to resign,' he added.

The organiser said MAWU was 'disgusted' to see a subsidiary of the supposedly progressive Barlows Group refusing to negotiate retrenchment procedures.

R200 pension for life!

FORTY-year-old Maria Maseko was one of the first workers discovered to have the cotton dust disease, Brown Lung, in the National Union of Textile Workers' health and safety campaign.

But, it has taken over two years for the Workmens' Compensation Commissioner to agree to pay her compensation for her disability.

When the union initially applied for compensation the Commissioner refused so the NUTW appealed against this decision as it was clear from Dr Neil White's tests that Sister Maseko had severe lung problems.

The union's appeal was successful and the Commissioner has now agreed to pay her about R1 5000 back-pay and a pension for life of nearly R200 a month.

Sister Maseko for the past sixteen years has worked in the weaving department at the Braitex factory in Springs.

In an interview with FOSATU Worker News recently, Sister Maseko described the conditions in the department as 'very dusty'.

'The more you were winding the more dust there was,' she said.

She said that in about 1976 she started to feel 'short of breath' and would cough continuously.

'I had a feeling that it was caused by the blow cleaning of the machine because the dust used to come through my nostrils,' Sister Maseko said.

'When I used to go to an outside doctor he used to tell me that I had got a cold and would give me some pills.'

'Well, it did not help as the feelings just continued,' she added.

Sister Maseko said that at times she would be off sick 'sometimes for three days and sometimes for a week'.

'As time went on I had more problems with my chest,' she added.

After NUTW's health and safety officer, Dr White, found that Sister Maseko had Brown Lung during a campaign at the factory, Braitex moved her to the dispatch department.

'But I still feel angry,' Sister Maseko said, 'as it was the conditions in the factory which caused my sickness and these have not changed. They are still blow cleaning their machines.'

The case of Sister Maseko underlines the importance of the union's Brown Lung campaign.

Last year the employers' association, the Textile Federation, told NUTW that it should drop its campaign as the federation had decided to hold its own Brown Lung tests.

For years the employers have done nothing about Brown Lung, why all of a sudden are they now interested in testing workers?.

An NUTW spokesperson said: 'We wonder when the Textile Federation would have started its investigations into the cotton dust disease, Brown Lung, if NUTW had not pressurised so vigorously around this issue.'

'Worker organisations will never stop pushing for the removal of health hazards because in the end it is workers, not employers, that get sick,' he added.



Brown Lung sufferer, Maria Maseko

Court told to reconsider decision

THE crucial battle to win stop order rights for National Union of Textile Workers' members at Table Bay Spinners has taken a new turn.

The Supreme Court of the Western Cape has told the industrial court to reconsider its earlier decision not to grant stop order rights.

The NUTW has been forced to go to the courts because the textile industry of the Western Cape operates a closed shop.

In terms of the closed shop only members of Norman Daniels' Textile Workers Industrial Union can have stop order rights — any other union must apply for an exemption from

the industrial council agreement.

When NUTW applied for an exemption for its members at Table Bay Spinners, Daniels used his position on the council to block the union.

NUTW then took the issue to the industrial court, but the court refused to overturn the industrial council's decision. This led to the union's Supreme Court appeal.

More than just stop order rights for Table Bay workers is at stake in these cases.

NUTW's membership in the Western Cape textile industry is rapidly expanding and, as a result, workers at many more

factories will be seeking exemption from the council's closed shop.

A clear order from the industrial court for the Table Bay Spinners' workers will make it easier for other workers to get stop order rights.

Meanwhile, in Natal the NUTW is waiting for the clothing industry's industrial council to decide whether it will allow clothing workers to decide in a secret ballot which union they want to be members of.

Towards the end of last year, workers at James North, a Pinetown clothing factory, won an exemption from the indus-

try's closed shop which forces all workers to belong to TUCSA's Garment Workers Industrial Union..

Now, workers from at least five other clothing factories have joined NUTW and also want to be exempted from the closed shop.

It has been suggested to the industrial council, that a ballot be held in the factories where NUTW has membership and if it proves to be the majority union then its members should automatically be granted exemptions.

The clothing industry's council is due to make its decision on March 14.

TUCSA unions fail to block NUTW

TUCSA unions attending the Congress of the International Textile Garment and Leather Workers Federation failed to win support for a resolution barring the National Union of Textile Workers from 'poaching' their members.

This is the second time that the TUCSA unions have attempted to get the international to intervene in the ongoing

struggle between NUTW and TUCSA's garment and textile unions.

In 1983 during a visit to South Africa by the international's president and general secretary, the TUCSA unions accused NUTW of 'disrupting and dividing' established unions and called on the ITGLWF to intervene.

At the October Congress,

which was held in Israel, it was decided to refer the 'South African problem' to the next ITGLWF Executive Committee meeting.

However, NUTW general secretary, John Copelyn, said: 'Leading opinion at the Congress felt that the TUCSA affiliates shouldn't rely on the international to solve their problems for them.'

NUTW pointed out to the Congress that the TUCSA unions had sweated with employers, had blocked the union's entry onto industrial councils and had abused the closed shop.

On top of this, TUCSA had called for the banning of unregistered unions and for the prosecution of illegal strikers, NUTW told Congress delegates.

Patons moves to Bophuthatswana

BRITISH multinational, Coats Patons, has decided to close its two Randfontein factories, lay off all the workers, and then re-open in Bophuthatswana where it can expect to pay its new employees a quarter of the wages.

In 1983, the two factories, JP Coats and Patons & Baldwin, were the centre of a battle between the National Union of Textile Workers and Evelyn Selora's splinter union.

In a secret ballot the majority of the 400 workers voted in favour of NUTW and since then the union has built up tremendous worker solidarity at the

factories.

Senior shop steward, Vusi Mavuso in an interview with FOSATU Worker News accused the company of moving in order to escape being 'pestered by FOSATU'.

Bophuthatswana's labour legislation bars South African-based unions from operating on their territory.

'People are very upset about the closing of the factories and at the moment relations between management and the workers are very bad,' he said.

'Those that have 30 years' service find that their sweat has built up the company and all

they have to show for it are lousy watches,' he added.

Brother Mavuso said that the company had only given them a 'wishy washy excuse' about the move being necessary because other companies were undercutting them.

'But I do not think this is true,' he said.

The company's 'retrenchment plan' began during the first quarter of this year and will take about 18 months to complete.

It has offered to pay workers one-and-a-half-week's wages for each year of service in severance pay.

'But it's a payment of money and that's the end of it. No more jobs,' said NUTW general secretary, John Copelyn.

'The company has now got rid of all the risks and can now reap the benefits of a name made by the sweat of South African workers,' he added.

Brother Copelyn said that Patons & Baldwin had not consulted with the union on the decision to close it had only discussed the details of the severance pay agreement.

Is this the kind of investment which is supposed to benefit the workers in South Africa?

Bakers strike ends in victory

ONE thousand workers in Bakers' Isando and Pinetown factories ended their two week legal strike with a taste of victory.

After four month's of wage negotiations, the management finally budged from their final offer of 12,5 percent and on Friday February 22, workers settled on a minimum wage of R96 per week — a 16,5 percent increase.

The wage negotiations follow the collapse last year of the biscuit industrial council covering the Transvaal and Natal when two major employers, Bakers and Fedbisco, withdrew to negotiate with the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union.

A new bargaining forum was set up and the minority unions, consisting of Norman Daniels' TUCSA union and CUSA's food union, were invited to present a united front with SFAWU against the biscuit bosses.

After only two meetings the other unions were ready to settle on 12,5 percent.

But SFAWU members decided to continue pushing for a living wage. They argued that 12,5 percent was even lower than the current rate of inflation.

At the Cape industrial coun-

cil, Daniels' union settled on a 10 and 12,5 percent increase for workers in the Bakers-owned Baumanns and Pyotts factories, making it even difficult for SFAWU members to win some-

thing better.

Still, SFAWU members decided to push on and declare a dispute. And when more than 30 days passed without any settlement, they went out on a le-

gal strike 'to make the bosses listen'.

Bakers shop steward chairperson, Tom Dlamini, explained how hard the strike was: 'Bakers management was

not moving, though they agreed that it was our right to strike.

'They wanted to see how long we could survive and keep united. But we were determined to win.'

He said the union had tried to involve the workers' families in the struggle and had called them to a big meeting where food was distributed.

'But the day after our mass meeting in Durban the bosses reacted by locking us out and giving an ultimatum saying that the final offer of 12,5 percent would be withdrawn if we did not return to work,' he added.

But the strike continued and after almost 24 hours of negotiations a settlement was reached.

Brother Dlamini said the struggle was important as South African employers should learn that workers would demand a living wage even during a recession.

'We will not carry the load of the bosses' and the government's bad planning.'

'Also, more than 200 Indian workers supported the strike, showing that real worker unity is possible,' he said.



Bakers' workers on their way to a strike meeting

Transport workers flock in

GOODS transport workers are flocking to the Transport and General Workers Union and in the past four months the union has won a majority at eight new Transvaal companies.

This breakthrough has been achieved in the face of tremendous hostility from the trucking bosses who seemed determined to keep TGWU out of their industry.

They were assisted in their blocking tactics by TUCSA's

African Transport Workers Union.

However, workers remained solidly behind the TGWU and continued to push for recognition.

Eventually, Cargo Carriers, the largest goods transport firm in the country, began discussions with TGWU. And now recognition talks are now on the go with four more transport companies.

The union is also expanding in the motor ferry sector of the transport industry.

Motorvia's Transvaal depot 9Acently recognised TGWU. It joins the company's Uitenage and Durban operations which recognised the union some time ago.

And at Southern Star, where the union was forced to declare a dispute because of management resistance, recognition talks are now underway.

Food workers issue call for unity

IN building a workers' movement in South Africa, unity is essential, Chris Dlamini, the president of both FOSATU and Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union, told a crowded annual general meeting on February 9.

Speaking to over 1 000 workers at the SFAWU AGM held at Kwathema near Springs, Brother Dlamini said: 'It is also

important that workers use the structures of the union to ensure workers' control.'

Food and Canning Workers Union president, Alfred Noko, also stressed the need for unity when he spoke.

The workers at the meeting went on to pledge their support for the building of one union in the food industry.

Factory wage talks in paper industry

FOR the first time in the history of the pulp and paper industrial council, employers have agreed to refer the wage negotiations back to factory-level in an attempt to break their deadlock with the unions.

It is ironic that the suggestion of plant-level talks was made during the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union's first negotiations at the council, because for years the employers have resisted discussing wages at the factories and have instead insisted that PWAU join the council.

When all the factory-level negotiations have finished, the industrial council will once again meet and the lowest minimum wage accepted in the factories will become the legal

minimum for the entire industry. The increases will be back-paid to January 1.

So far, though, the plant-level talks have not all been smooth sailing. And for the first time, the paper industry is without a council agreement as the present agreement expired on January 1.

Up to now, PWAU has settled with Mondi, Nampak and Carlton on a 20-25c per hour increase for January with an agreement that there will be a further increase in July which management has agreed will not be less than 5c per hour.

But, predictably, the union has been forced to declare a dispute with the giant Sappi company which initially, at wage talks at Port Elizabeth's

Adamas mill, offered a wage increase less than their offer at the council.

In Sappi's Tugela mill, where the company still wishes to deduct the increase that it gave in September from the present increase, the other unions sitting on the council have joined PWAU in the dispute.

PWAU members have also resisted some employer's efforts to pay interim increases. At Mondi's Felixton and Umgeni mills, workers stopped work when management pinned up a notice saying they intended paying interim increases.

Workers have said that they would rather wait for the right increases than undermine their bargaining position by accepting interim increases.

At those factories where settlement has been reached, the new minimum wage for January now ranges between R2 and R2,36 per hour.

Sappi's offers up to now do not bring their wages anywhere near the R2 mark. And yet it makes 40 percent of all the paper that is made in South Africa!

'It is ridiculous to hear the way that such a big and fast expanding company is pleading poverty,' a PWAU organiser said.

'Also, the fight over the other demands has not really even started. These will have to be settled before PWAU will agree to sign an agreement,' the organiser added.

New maternity benefits at Henkel

WOMEN workers at Henkel at Prospecton will be paid as much as 78 percent of their wages during maternity leave as a result of a new agreement negotiated by the Chemical Workers Industrial Union.

In addition to the 45 percent claimed from UIF, the company has agreed to pay women workers 20 percent of their wages if they have less than three years' service and 33 percent to those with longer service. Henkel has said it would assist workers in claiming UIF benefits.

The new agreement gives workers a total of three month's maternity leave.

Demands for metal wage talks

IT'S that time of the year again! *he yearly tussle at the giant metal industry's industrial council is due to begin.

And for the first time all the unions affiliated to the International Metalworkers Federation, which includes the Metal and Allied Workers Union, have agreed to send a joint proposal to the industrial council.

The joint proposal was drawn up at a meeting of the IMF's South African Council on March 8. The main demands

are:

● A minimum wage of R3,50 per hour rising to a R6,53 minimum for artisans — with a guaranteed across-the-board increase of 50c.

● The reduction of working hours to 40 hours per week with no loss of pay.

● Four weeks paid leave for all workers with an additional one week's leave after four year's service and an additional two week's leave after eight year's service.

● A restriction of overtime and overtime to be paid at double time during the week and treble time over the weekend and holidays.

● May Day as a paid public holiday.

● The employer's contribution to the pension fund to be increased to 12 percent and this money to be invested in family housing.

● Severance pay to be one month's wages per year of service.

Everything set for new federation

IT looks like everything is set for the formation of the new super federation later this year.

The drafting committee, which was set up last year to draw up the constitution for the new federation, has completed its work.

Copies of the constitution have been sent to all the

unions, which have committed themselves to the new federation, for their final comments.

Then in June, the National Executive Committees of the unions will all meet to discuss arrangements for the launching congress of the new federation which is likely to be held in October.

WORKING WOMEN

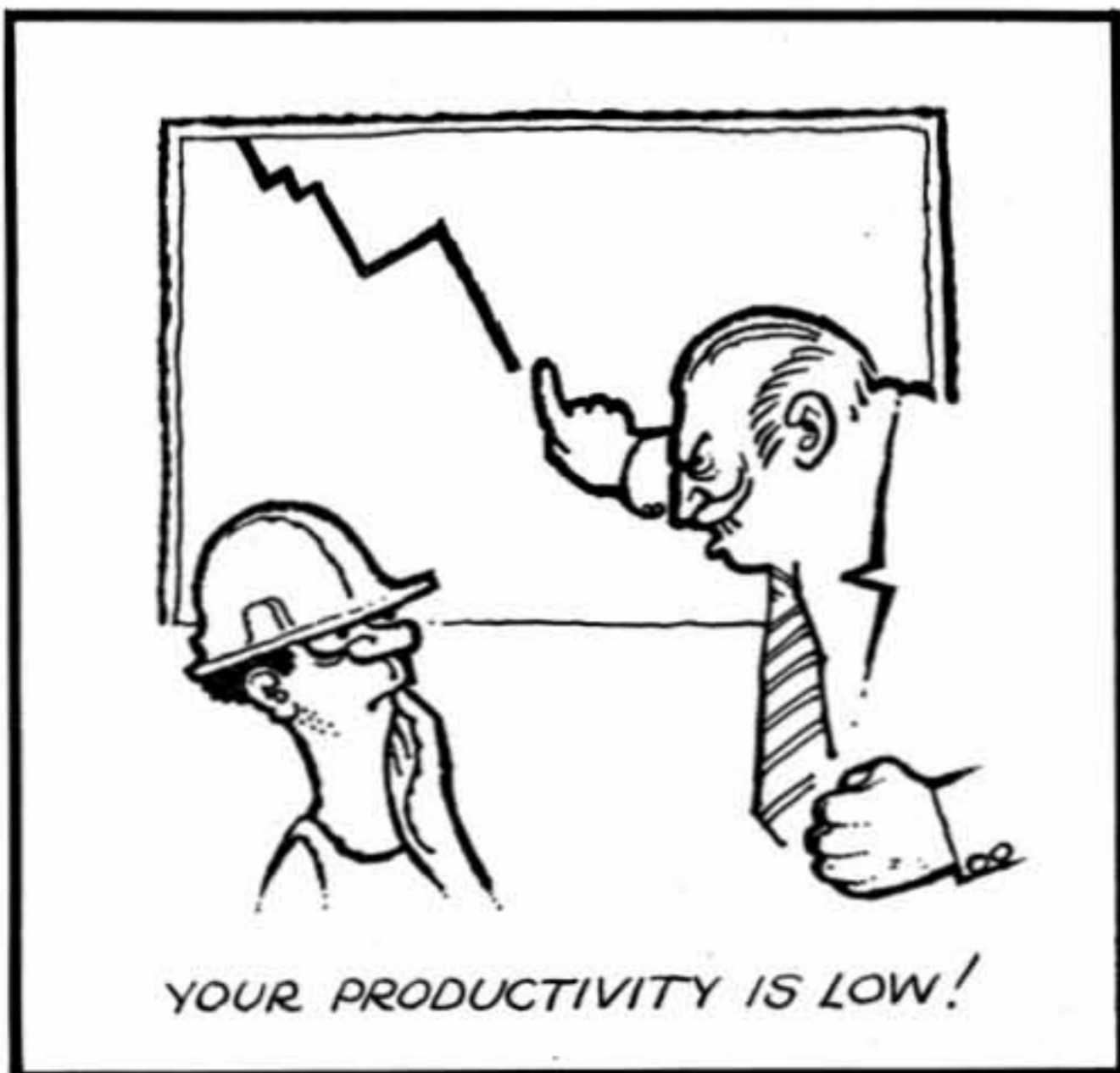
'The thing that made me leave was this. The dress I was sewing was R59, and I was earning a lower wage than that dress.' Mabel, a garment worker.



1 Liza Makalela at the launch of the FOSATU booklet 'Women Workers'. 2 A women at home in Soweto. 3 Garment workers. 4 A mother with her child who is being treated for gastro-enteritis at the Alexandra clinic.

'I would like to remind management that women are going to have children who will be tomorrow's workers. Management must contribute to that because they are paying low wages.' Liza Makalela, NAAWU administrator.

The photographs and comments on this page come from the book 'Working Women' which is about the lives of South Africa's black women workers. Women speak out about their problems at work and at home. They describe their struggles against the government, the bosses — and even their own husbands. 'Working Women' will be published by Sached and Ravan Press in May.



HOW many people are unemployed at the moment? Every worker knows that the only real answer to this question is that it is too many. But it is important to know just how many people are unemployed so that we know just how big the problem is.

Normally, the government of a country would publish this information. It is a government's job to collect and publish information. This is a first step to seeing how serious a problem is. But in South Africa no-one really knows how many people are unemployed. This government only seems to publish information when it looks good or when it is forced to. Often it just doesn't publish it at all.

Everyone wants to know how bad unemployment is. When unemployment is very high then it means that the whole economic situation is very serious. We believe that the government is scared to publish a true unemployment figure because it is extremely high.

In South Africa, unemploy-

ment is even more serious than in many other countries because the vast majority of those without jobs are not protected by Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) benefits or any other social security benefits. So silence is best for the government. The unemployed need to be kept hidden. The government does not want lots of unemployed workers cluttering up their nice clean cities with their sad, hungry and often angry faces.

HOW MANY???

ment is even more serious than in many other countries because the vast majority of those without jobs are not protected by Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) benefits or any other social security benefits. So silence is best for the government. The unemployed need to be kept hidden. The government does not want lots of unemployed workers cluttering up their nice clean cities with their sad, hungry and often angry faces.

Until about eight years ago there were no consistent unemployment figures for black workers available at all and a big political storm broke out when some researchers estimated that there were over two million unemployed in South Africa. Partly as a result of this storm, the then department of Statistics introduced the Current Population Survey. This survey of many thousands of households looks at all the race groups except whites regularly.

Is this CPS reliable? Does it tell us what effect the present recession is having? Does it tell

us just how many people have no real hope of getting a job in industry? The answer seems to be a clear no to all these questions.

We all know from our experience that this is the worst recession we have had since 1930 and yet according to the CPS, the unemployment rate among black workers grew from only 7,8 percent in 1981 to 8,5 percent in 1983 and then fell back to 8 percent in 1984. It says that the number of jobless blacks increased from 425 000 to 488 000 in 1984 — a mere 63 000.

There is obviously something seriously wrong. If we are to believe the government's statisticians, the employment of black workers grew by 58 000 between 1981 and 1982, by 83 000 the next year and by a massive 370 000 between 1983 and 1984. Where are all these new workers?

According to other government information, the number of black workers in the manufacturing sector, the most important employment creator,

grew by only 4 200 over the same period. Which figure do we believe?

We are sure that the Central Statistical Services (as the department of Statistics is now called) has a clever explanation for these strange figures but as far as we are concerned the figures they publish are meant to confuse rather than inform. In one publication they say that in 1984 there were 1 101 000 black workers in manufacturing and in another they say that there are 750 000. Where are the other 351 000?

Likewise, one publication says there were 630 000 black miners in 1984 — another says 772 000. Where are they? What about the 780 000 workers in 'trade' according to one publication as opposed to 356 000 in another? Where are the other 400 000 or so workers, selling meat at bus ranks?

No matter what explanation we might or might not get for these very different figures the effect is only too clear. Basically, there is confusion. We go so far as to say that such confu-

sion is deliberate. The government is scared of the truth.

The present economic position is hopeless. Using the government's own figures, we believe that during the present recession 500 000 jobs have either been destroyed or not created because of the recession. Compare this to the estimated 200 000 jobs needed each year just to employ school leavers.

The so-called modern industrial sector has created 2 000 jobs a year. Nearly all of these have been for skilled workers. Jobs for black workers have been destroyed at the rate of about 17 000 a year. This gives a very clear idea of how bad things are.

Apart from the government, only two sectors made a positive contribution to job creation in the modern sector of the economy. Electricity provided about 4 000 jobs a year, half of which went to whites and the other to black workers. Finance and business services (banks, building societies and insurance companies) provided about 8 400 jobs a year — a mere

1 100 of these for black workers.

The rest of the economy is a disaster. The manufacturing sectors destroyed jobs at the rate of 23 000 a year, most of these were for black workers. All in all, over the period 1981 to 1984 nearly one quarter of a million jobs were lost or not created in manufacturing.

This tragic story of jobs destroyed and the picture we see before our eyes every day just does not fit with the government's unemployment figure of eight percent (or 488 000 people). If there are such different figures being produced isn't the truth being hidden?

Furthermore, UIF does little to help. FOSATU has just published a study on UIF which shows that a tiny one percent of the unemployed appear to get benefits. Yet the UIF is in danger of going bankrupt because the government has continued to pay in a fixed amount of R7 million each year despite the worsening economic situation.

The truth must be told because very great changes are needed.

COMMENT

THE present economic crisis is extremely serious. And there is absolutely no sign that government policy will correct the problem. The reason for this is that the present problems started developing many, many years ago. They run deep in our economy and society. Playing around with budgets and taxes will not solve them. It will only cause even more suffering for workers.

One proposed solution — not surprisingly it comes from businessmen — is that the government must stop interfering with the economy.

But, over the past hundred years, government interference has been mainly to the benefit of business. Their laws have created the migrant labour system as a source of cheap labour. The government has also protected South African companies against foreign competition and it has supported and protected white workers and farmers.

Why then are business biting the very hand that has fed them all these years? The truth is that big business is looking for new areas to make profits. There are now some very large companies which are big enough to take over activities which previously only the government was able to carry out — like Iscor, Sasol and Soekor.

Another area which big companies are interested in is providing housing and land for the wealthy black middle class. In the past this market was closed to them by apartheid but now these companies want the laws that have blocked them removed.

When they talk about free enterprise, they are talking about profits. Profits will only be made in selling houses to the wealthy. There are no profits to be made from the poverty and misery of the mass of the workers. Workers' problems will remain unsolved.

Foreign companies also claim that they can help solve our problems. But, how far can they succeed in this? Whatever they do for their own workers will only be a small drop in the ocean of needs. Their real interest is in protecting their profits.

Why is the government so terrified of disinvestment? We suspect that the real reason is that the government needs money. It has milked the people of South Africa dry, but it still needs more. So, the government is turning its eyes to the rich governments of America and Europe. At present getting money from these governments is politically impossible. Doors need to be opened. This is why the government has been hinting at the possibility of talks with the ANC and even the Afrikaner newspapers have been pushing for a National Convention. But will a National Convention help workers?

The government is getting desperate. However, our problems are huge and the solutions are not easy. Big problems need big solutions. None of the political forces in South Africa have developed a programme or plan to solve these social and economic problems. Workers — of all colours, as we are now beginning to see — have to carry the greatest burden. So, it seems that workers will have to take up the task of working out a programme to solve the problems. In future editions FOSATU Worker News will be considering the points raised here.



SORRY, I MUST CLOSE THE FACTORY!



HELP US FIGHT DISINVESTMENT!

WARRIORS' DAY



MAY 1



PART ELEVEN:

THE ICU COLLAPSES

BY the end of 1924 paid up membership of the ICU stood at 11 000. Most of these members were concentrated in the Eastern and Western Cape. By 1927 membership had reached 100 000, most of whom were farm labourers in the Transvaal and Natal. This issue of FOSATU Worker News looks at how the ICU rose to become a powerful organisation representing black interests. We also look at some of the reasons for its collapse in 1929/1930.

The 1920's were years of growing hardship for blacks living on white farms. Previously many Africans had lived on white farms as 'squatters' or labour tenants. Squatters paid the white farm owner rent either in cash or by giving him part of their crop (usually half of it). Labour tenants were able to cultivate their crops and keep cattle in return for labour service to the white farmer (usually three months a year). In the 1920's this began to change. Capitalist agriculture developed rapidly. Between 1921 and 1930 white owned land that was under cultivation in the Transvaal grew by 40 percent. The number of white owned sheep increased by 80 percent. Thousands of squatters and labour tenants were pushed off white farms at this time to make way for new crops. Those that stayed were given less land to cultivate and found that the number of cattle they could keep was sharply reduced. In

Umvoti in Natal, for example, the amount of land a labour tenant family could get was reduced from 90 acres (and as many cattle as he was able to run) to one or two acres and 10 head of cattle. Worse still the amount of time the labourer had to work for the farm owner was increased. In the Ermelo and Carolina districts in the Transvaal the period of labour service doubled from three to six months.

Labour tenants became increasingly angry. Even before the ICU spread into the countryside there were signs of unrest. For example, squatters in Standerton (Transvaal) refused to pay rent. Others demanded to plough where they liked. However, it was not until the ICU organisers moved into the countryside that this grew into a general movement of protest.

The ICU offered hope that this oppression could be ended. In Escourt (Natal) the general secretary of the ICU, Clements Kadalie, told a meeting: 'It will not be long before the natives take over the farms of the whiteman.' From the Eastern Transvaal, an ICU official wrote: 'We say farewell to you who do not want to join the ICU, for we are march-

A farmer poses with his labourers and prize pigs
Above left: Farm workers in Natal during the early 1900's.



The making of the WORKING

ing forward to meet Africa...VUKA AFRICA! MAYIBUYE AFRICA! An ex-ICU member in Umvoti, Maria Dhladla, still remembers today: 'People rejoiced when they heard about the ICU. They thought they would get more cattle and more land....People were tired of working on the farms. They thought the ICU would make and end to the farms.'

One of the main achievements of the ICU in this period was to give labour tenants confidence. From the end of 1926 thousands joined the ICU in the Eastern and South-Eastern Transvaal and Natal. In Nelspruit in the Eastern Transvaal an ICU meeting of 9 000 people was held in 1928. In Greytown (Natal) 16 000 people joined — 80 percent of the whole adult African population of the district.

In both the Eastern Transvaal and Natal, labour tenants organised strikes and refused to work for less than 9 shillings a day. Many stopped work in the belief that they were getting back their land. In the Lichtenburg diamond diggings 35 000 labourers went on strike. In Middelburg, Transvaal, ICU organiser, Thomas Mbeti, led a successful campaign for blacks to walk on pavements and not among the

traffic in the streets. In rural areas all over the Transvaal and Natal, labourers became openly defiant and refused to obey orders.

White farmers were both frightened and shocked. In Lydenburg district they rushed to town to form a defence committee. But the farmers soon went back on to the attack. ICU tenants were evicted on a mass scale. Their passes were signed 'ICU' to prevent them moving to a new farm. The Masters and Servants Act was used to prosecute strikers. Cattle were seized, and resisters were physically beaten.

The ICU was unable to help and at this point major weaknesses in the organisation were revealed. The ICU promised to help through the courts but usually this could only delay and not stop evictions. Also, it simply did not have the resources to provide this aid to the thousands being evicted. The ICU promised to buy farms, but it did not have enough money and the government stopped the purchase of farms they wished to buy. It soon became clear that the ICU had no strategy or plan. It mobilised people but then failed to organise them. It held meetings and recruited members but then failed to stay in contact with them or give them actual support. Many members thought that the ICU

would act as their saviour and were never told that it was only they that could save themselves by building a strong organisation. As Voetganger Manape, a Free State sharecropper put it: 'Had it been more strongly and carefully organised, we would be better off today.'

This lack of organisation also prevented members control over their leaders. Members dues were spent wastefully and on several occasions they went into the officials own pockets. Ventersdorp ICU member, Israel Mathuloe, remembers: 'They put it in their pockets, their back pockets.' Members became angry and disillusioned. One ICU official was told in the Western Transvaal, 'you promised them the world's things, but none of these promises has ever been fulfilled, so they are no longer following.'

Other problems further weakened the ICU. At the ICU's head office, officials were even less controlled and often out of touch with membership. In 1926 when the communist party members of the ICU's executive demanded a more effective organisation and a more militant strategy, they were expelled. The ICU in this way lost some of its best leaders. Those that demanded the expulsions thought that they might win recognition from the government and support from the white trade unions if they followed a less militant and more respectable line. But this did not happen and the leadership was unable to provide another plan. Once the membership started dropping, new conflicts developed among the leaders. Some accused others of stealing the union's money. In 1929 the ICU split apart into three separate groups. By 1930 it had almost totally collapsed.

The ICU had failed, but it was not a complete failure. It should have probably put more effort into organising workers in the towns and in industry but at this time the working class in the towns was still quite small. It should have developed a stronger and more democratic organisation but it found huge problems in the countryside and was continually attacked by the State. It made mistakes, but these have provided the lessons for later generations of trade unionists. It also left behind it a memory and tradition of struggle. As one member said of that time: 'We too tasted freedom.'



THE INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL WORKERS' UNION. OF AFRICA I.C.U.	
MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTION CARD	
Branch	Middelburg
Section	...
Branch Secretary	P. W. ...
Address	10 ...
Local Office:	24 LOOP STREET, CAPE TOWN.
National Secretary:	CLEMENTS KADALIE.
General Secretary:	J. A. LA GUMA.

Above left: Farm workers in Natal during the early 1900s.

Left: A night time expedition on its way to spray poison on locusts.

Above: An Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) membership card.

CLASSES



QwaQwa workers, who were hired by Fluor to work at Sasol, speak of their bitter experience



This slogan was used in the United Mineworkers of America's campaign against Fluor



Not even the beautiful Drakensberg mountains can hide QwaQwa's poverty

ONLY three-days after the 6 500 Sasol workers were sacked for their role in the November stay-away, scabs were being bused in from the homelands by American multinational, Fluor Corporation.

An investigation has revealed that Fluor hired hundreds of workers from the homeland of QwaQwa in order to maintain production at the Sasol II and III plants near Secunda. It is likely that others were recruited from other homelands.

FOSATU Worker News recently travelled to Thibella, a small QwaQwa village, which lies in the shadow of the Drakensberg mountains only a short distance from the popular tourist resorts.

A large group of bitter workers told of how they had been signed on by a Fluor recruitment officer on November 9, never suspecting that within 10 weeks they would find themselves dumped back in the homeland.

None of them were told they would be taking the jobs of the sacked Sasol workers.

Not that it would have made any difference as they were all grateful to get a job. And here lies the advantage of South Africa's homeland system for employers.

Under the smokescreen of creating 'independent countries' for blacks, the government has, in reality, merely set up huge migrant labour camps.

Attempts to create employment in the homelands have failed dismally and with the recession they have now become dumping grounds for the unemployed.

Starvation for most has almost become a way of life. And the only way out is for at least one member of the family to get a job in 'white' South Africa.

The homeland system, therefore, makes it easy for an employer to fire all strikers, like Sasol did, and then replace them with scabs from the homelands.

Where the sacked strikers have certain skills, employers use the scabs to keep production going until their workers are forced to come back to work.

In the past, this tactic has been used by employers to crush unions as they can weed out the strong union members when they re-employ the strikers.

The QwaQwa workers told FOSATU Workers News that seven bus loads left the homeland for Sasol on November 9. They were all taken to camps within the perimeter of the Sasol security fences.

Johannes Tsotetsi, one of those recruited, said that the next morning they were all taken to the Safety Department where they were told that they were no longer Fluor workers but were now Sasol workers.

'We were told that Sasol was the father of the family which will give us uniforms. Later we were told by the supervisors that we had only been hired on

a temporary basis and that we were doing the jobs of the people who had been fired during the strike but when the people get back then we are to go,' he said.

Surprisingly, some of the QwaQwa workers worked in what is called the SDP department.

This department is responsible for cleaning the houses of white supervisors and management in nearby Secunda.

It would seem that not even the cleaning of company houses could wait for the return of the Sasol workers!

However, only six days after they had arrived the SDP workers were told that they were not needed any longer and were shipped back to the homeland.

In a memorandum handed out to Sasol employees some time after Christmas, the company praised itself for having been able 'to handle the labour disruption without having any marked effects over the short

term.'

At about that stage, Sasol announced in the press that it would 'sympathetically' consider applications from ex-employees 'some of whom have been recently dismissed for participating in the unlawful stay away'.

This spelt the end of the QwaQwa workers' temporary stay at Sasol. They had achieved what the company wanted them to — their scab labour had enabled Sasol to weather the 'labour disruption'.

On January 22, the majority of the QwaQwa workers were told by the Fluor personnel officer that there was 'no more work' and that in the next day or two they would be taken home by bus.

Only 10 weeks after their recruitment, the workers found themselves back in the homeland — pawns in the struggle between Sasol and the sacked members of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union.

American unionists demonstrate against apartheid

DURING the past several months more American union members than ever before have been involved in demonstrations against South Africa's apartheid system.

The demonstrations were called by black civil rights groups to protest against the military actions, detentions, and the firing of Sasol workers which followed the two-day stayaway in the Transvaal in November.

Unions soon joined in the protests outside the South African embassy in Washington and the South African consulates throughout the United States, with leaders of the AFL-CIO (the giant federation of American unions) playing a prominent role.

In symbolic gestures which received a great deal of publicity in the United States, union officials, members of the United States Congress, and other prominent Americans deliberately had themselves arrested for trying to enter the South African government's offices.

Because opposition to apartheid is such a popular cause in the major United States' cities, those arrested generally were released without being prosecuted.

Beyond symbolic actions, union members are now considering a broad range of other tactics to protest against apartheid.

'We have sent telegrams, letters and resolutions of protest to the racist government of South Africa, asking that it desist,' said the Newspaper Guild's president, Charles Perlik.

'They have gone unanswered and unheeded...It is time for an end to words and the beginning of action.'

'It is time to end American industries' involvement in this unspeakable system of apartheid.'

Some of the actions which have occurred or are planned include:

< Local and regional union groups are becoming more involved in campaigns in states and major cities to force withdrawal of public funds from corporations which do business in South Africa.

In many cases, public employee unions have played a major role in winning such campaigns by pushing to have their pension funds disinvest from those companies.

The Labour Committee Against Apartheid in New York is coordinating a conference in March on Labour and South Africa, which will be followed by a speaking tour in which unionists across the United States will meet with representatives of the emerging South African unions.

The conference and the tour

are expected to be an important step towards increasing worker awareness of the reasons for the anti-apartheid movement.

< Members of the longshoremen's union in San Francisco refused to unload South African cargo from a Dutch ship.

Their protest, which cost them about \$80 000 (about R40 000) in wages delayed the delivery of the cargo for 10 days.

A court then issued an order to unload the ship, which if disobeyed, could have busted the union. At that point, the workers voted to end their protest.

In addition to these activities, other possible tactics to support South African workers are now under discussion in the United States.

'We have the public's attention on apartheid more than at any time in American history,' said an official of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union.

'Now we have to design actions which use that public awareness to have real impact.'



A placard criticizes the 'Constructive Engagement' policy of American president, Ronald Reagan.



Just before Christmas last year, demonstrators sing freedom songs outside the South African Consulate in New York

The shrinking car industry

IN 1924 the first motor car to be assembled in South Africa rolled off the production line at the Ford Motor Company in Port Elizabeth. Since then the motor industry in this country has become a powerful force, employing a total of 150 000 workers in the vehicle assembly, component manufacturing and service industries and achieving sales of around R3,5 billion in 1983.

The present problems that are confronting the industry should not be allowed to hide its amazing growth over the past 60 years. In 1963, 15 800 workers produced 148 000 vehicles. In 1983 around 150 000 workers produced 405 810 vehicles. Over 20 years the workforce has grown by 859 percent while vehicle production has grown some 175 percent.

The Local Content Programme

One of the reasons for the huge growth in the number of motor workers is the setting up of a local content programme by the government in 1962. This programme forced manufacturers to increase the number of locally manufactured parts included in the vehicles they assembled. As a result the component manufacturing industry has grown over the years, which, in turn, has created many more jobs. However, the government's policy of protecting the local motor industry against the import of overseas parts or cars is now being changed, creating problems for employment



*A worker on an assembly line tightens the wheel nuts
A motor plant's body shop where the shell of the car is constructed*

in South Africa.

Concentration of the Industry

At one point South Africa was seen as an attractive market for the large foreign motor com-

panies. It was, and still is, the largest vehicle market on the African continent. Of the 10 million vehicles registered in Africa, two-thirds are in South Africa. Also, they hoped that the motor plants in South Africa would be able to sell their vehicles to the rest of

Is the future so bleak?

Africa. But because of the continued existence of apartheid, most countries now refuse to allow South African-built trucks and cars to be imported.

Initially, however, these two factors together with the high profits available from the cheap labour in this country, encouraged most of the international motor companies to invest in South Africa. By 1974, 14 manufacturers were operating in this country, and were offering the fairly small South African market a choice of some 40 different models of motor vehicles. As the car companies are quick to point out, this situation was completely out of step with the rest of the world. Nowhere else did so many manufacturers and models exist. The situation could not last and over the years many motor assembly firms have pulled out and there has been a gradual concentration of the companies into fewer hands. Today there are eight companies. It is likely that over the next few years through withdrawals and mergers, the number of companies will shrink even more.

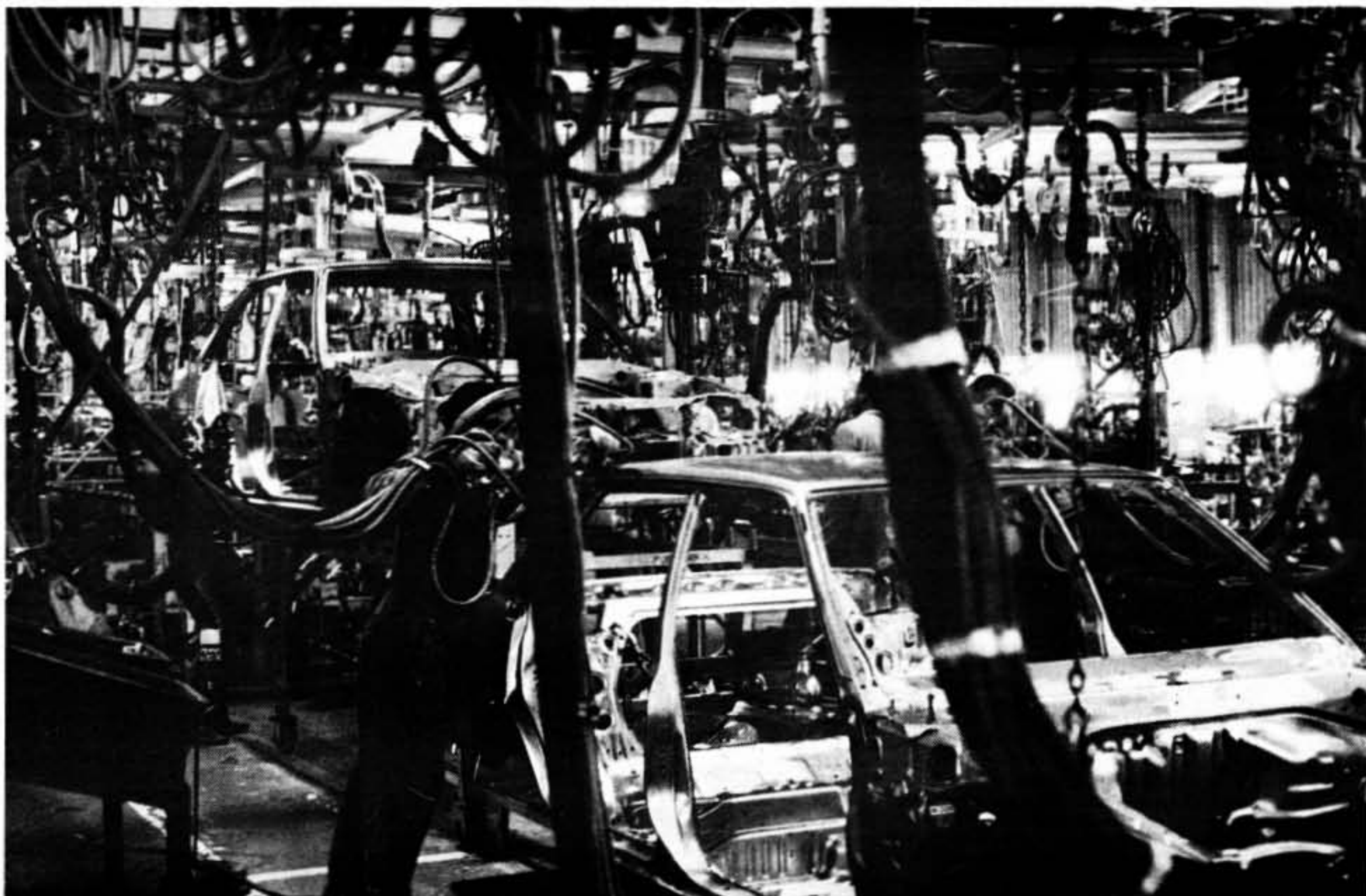
Motor companies are quick to say that this shrinking of the number of auto firms is mainly due to the high cost of producing motor cars today. However, the increasing concentration of automobile manufacturers at an international level has also affected the local situation.

Most of the big multinational motor companies are linked in some way or other with the other companies. The recent Ford/Amcar merger, for example, is a reflection of the increasing co-operation between Ford and Toyo Kogyo, the Japanese manufacturer of Mazda in which Ford has a 25 percent share.

Another important factor in the concentration of the car companies is the increasing ownership of these companies by large South African companies. Anglo American is now the largest shareholder in the newly formed Samcor (formed after the Ford/Amcar merger). Sanlam recently bought Nissan. Toyota, South Africa's most profitable company is owned by the Wesco group. So, not only has there been a reduction in the number of car companies, the industry has moved more and more into monopoly control.

This monopoly control is also slowly moving into the component and service sections of the industry. Wesco has recently extended its component company, Metair, which is now a major force in components. Wesco, Sanlam (through its subsidiary Nissan) and Anglo American (through its subsidiary Amic) have built a glass factory in Bophuthatswana to

Continued on next page



Unions and the motor industry

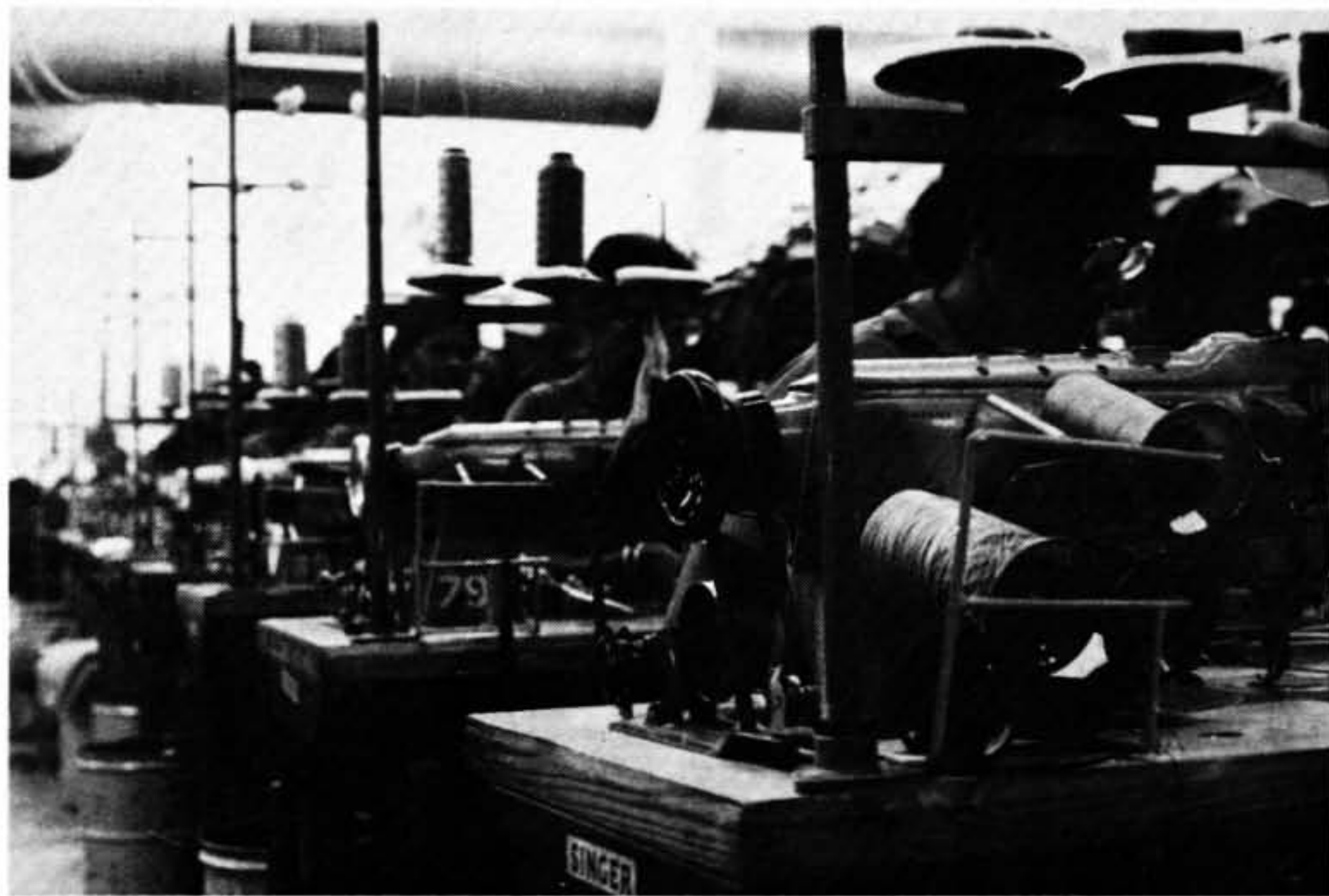
Continued from page 14

provide the windscreens they need. Also, the largest retailing operation in the car industry, McCarthy, is owned ultimately by Anglo American.

Unionisation

The motor assembly industry is the most highly unionised in the country. The National Automobile and Allied Workers Union has organised about half of the industry and negotiates in all the assembly plants except Nissan. NAAWU has over the past 10 years improved wages and working conditions to the point where they are the best in the country. NAAWU's organising campaigns have included a number of firsts including the first, and probably still the only, union to have organised the majority of workers of all races in one industry into a union. In 1980 it was the first union to break the R2 per hour minimum wage level and in 1984 it passed the R3 an hour minimum wage. In 1982 NAAWU was the first union to organise an industry-wide strike (the Ford/GM/Volkswagen strike). And it was the first union to organise a nation-wide company strike (the 1983 Autoplastics strike).

The components industry is not so well organised. Part of the problem here is that the in-



Long rows of women workers sew the car trimmings

dustry is very widespread — there are a large number of factories, many of which employ small workforces. However, the improved relationship between unions affiliated to International Metalworkers Federation (NAAWU, the Metal and Allied Workers Union and the Motor Industry Combined Workers Union) promises better union organisation. Hopefully, in the near future, wages and working conditions for the component industry will reach the levels won by NAAWU in the motor assembly plants.

The same co-operation is evident in the Tyre and Rubber industry where NAAWU and

MAWU between them have organised close to 70 percent of the industry and together with another FOSATU affiliate, the Chemical Workers Industrial Union, have turned their attention to the industrial rubber sector. NAAWU's first negotiations at the Eastern Province Tyre and Rubber Industrial Council, where it replaced the whites-only Iron and Steel Workers Union as the major negotiating union, achieved a minimum wage of R2,15.

The Future

At the present time the future is hard to predict. Undoubtedly, motor vehicles will continue to

be built in South Africa. In fact, it is likely that more and more vehicles roll off the local assembly lines. However, these will be produced by fewer manufacturers. And we can expect that some of the current motor companies will either withdraw, go bankrupt, or merge. As a result many workers will lose their jobs — a serious problem which the closure of the Ford Neave plant in Port Elizabeth has revealed. On top of this, the reversal of government policy protecting the local motor industry will expose the motor companies to competition from the mass producers of America, Europe and especially Japan.

This will put even more pressures on the employment situation. The final ingredient in this unemployment pie is the increasing mechanisation and robotisation of the motor plants.

The motor companies are encouraging the increasing control of the industry by just a few manufacturers, both at a local level and internationally. The South African government is not interested in preventing this. So, the only ones who can are the unions. But, in order to overcome these problems confronting motor workers will require unity, strength and far-sighted leadership.

The struggle for trade unions

What is a trade union?

When workers come together and decide to form an organisation to help them at their work, this organisation is called a trade union. But, as we will see it is not always easy to form trade unions, and workers have had a very long struggle to do so.

How did trade unions start?

This is a long story, and we will only look at the most important points. The first trade unions were started in England and Europe about 200 years ago. They were started by workers who had to work very long hours in dark, dirty, dangerous and noisy conditions in the factories, workshops and mines. They were paid very low wages for the work they did. The people who worked were poor and powerless, while the bosses for whom they worked were rich and powerful.

But why did workers have to work like this? Couldn't they have done something else — something nicer?

Well the problem for workers then, and for workers today, is that they had no real choice. They had to work, and they had to work for the people who owned the factories.

It had not always been like that in Europe. Great changes had slowly taken place.

Traders become capitalists

For more than 1 000 years, the people of what we now call Europe, had traded with other countries mainly in the Middle East and Far East. These traders were often called merchants, and they traded in gold, silver, beautiful cloth, spices to stop food going rotten, salt, iron and many other things. Many of these goods came from Africa and Asia, and were carried by land and sea to Europe.

About 600 years ago some of the kings and queens in Europe grew stronger and decided to try and deal directly with the far-away places producing these things, rather than rely on traders. So, they sent explorers such as Marco Polo, Christopher Columbus and Bartholomew Diaz to search for the areas where these goods could be found. The explorers wanted to get to India and China by sea, and they also wanted to get to the gold mines that they knew lay south of the great deserts of Africa.

The explorers who tried to sail around Africa succeeded. Others like Christopher Columbus, sailed west and came to

This space in each edition will be set aside specially for students. For the next few issues of FOSATU Worker News, we will be carrying a simple history of trade unions. It will be looking at how and why trade unions were formed, who they represent and how they operate. In future, together with features on interesting topics, we hope to carry poems, letters, drawings and comments sent in by student readers. So if you have something to say or send, write to The Editor, P O Box 18109, Dalbridge 4014.



Explorer, Christopher Columbus, 'discovers' South America while trying to find a new route to India

America. Eventually they sailed around America and reached India and China because, as you know, the world is round like a ball.

These voyages led to greater trade between Europe and these far-away lands, and had huge effects on the whole world. The traders were becoming more powerful because they began to hoard their wealth. They were beginning to change into what are called capitalists.

Certain powerful and determined people saw that if they could take over the control of this trade, then they could become very wealthy. But, to control the trade, they would have to control the way in which these goods were transported. So these people grouped together to form companies which bought the ships. In fact, when they grouped together they found that they could build bigger and more powerful ships, and also that they had the support of the kings and religious leaders. Of course, trade was very profitable, and it was regarded as something which was virtuous and important. How did trade make these people wealthy?

Next issue we look at how these early capitalists became wealthy through profits and how their greed for profit drove them to war.

Right: Students gleefully burn the Empangeni Transport pamphlets which urged them to board the buses and break the boycott.
Below: The chairman of the Co-ordinating Committee, Mr S Z Conco, tells the department of Transport's committee of enquiry about the company's bad attitude towards commuters.



MORE than 60 000 workers living near Richards Bay and Empangeni have been boycotting Empangeni buses since January 14 in protest against the company's poor service.

The three-month-old boycott was sparked off when Empangeni Transport, a subsidiary of United Transport, hiked up its bus fares.

According to independent research, the fare on one route was increased by 125 percent.

WE WILL NOT RIDE!

And on the route between Empangeni and Esikhwini, the fares have gone up by 320 percent over the past six years.

However, fares are not the only problems that commuters in the area have experienced with Empangeni Transport.

The commuters have complained that the buses are extremely overloaded and filthy and that they rarely run according to the schedule.

'Empangeni Transport also does not consult the commuters. Any communication is merely one way,' a worker told FOSATU Worker News.

'The attitude of the company is to rake as much profit as possible even at the expense of the comfort, convenience and safety of the commuters,' he added.

At mass meetings on January 15 in Nseleni, Esikhwini and Ngwelezane townships, commuters resolved to have 'nothing more to do with the company'.

At the Esikhwini meeting, which was attended by about 15 000 people, a committee of ten was elected in order 'to seek out another transport service'. Eight out of the ten committee members are active members of FOSATU unions in the area.

Since then, representatives from all the townships and some rural areas have come together to form a Co-ordinating Committee.

The committee's first task was to find alternative transport for the boycotters who faced a 30 kilometre or more walk to work.

They met with local business representatives some of whom agreed to provide private transport for their workers — this has taken the form of mini-buses, bakkies, lorries and buses.

The committee also arranged for taxi owners to reduce their fares. In Esikhwini and Nseleni, the taxi owners agreed to reduce their fares by as much as 30 percent during peak commuter hours.

'This position has not changed even with the fuel increase,' a committee member said.

For the schoolchildren, the

committee organised for three other independent bus operators to come in and assist.

On January 18, the Co-ordinating Committee decided to appeal to the Minister of Transport, Hendrik Schoeman, to set up a committee of enquiry to look into the problems.

After a meeting between top officials of the department of Transport and the Co-ordinating Committee, the Minister agreed to set up a two-man committee of enquiry.

In the meantime, the bus company stepped up its campaign to break the boycott using Radio Zulu and by distributing pamphlets to schoolchildren.

The pamphlets appealed to schoolchildren to begin using the buses because, the company said, they were merely 'victims' of a situation which did not concern them.

At the usual Sunday mass meeting in the townships, the pamphlets were symbolically burnt by the very schoolchildren they were meant to appeal to.

On February 11, 12 and 13, the committee of enquiry headed by Emile Nicsh visited the area and heard representations from the commuters, local businessmen and the bus company.

Over 6 000 boycotters attended the hearing on February 11 forcing the committee of enquiry to hold the hearing in the open air.

In a festive mood the boycotters cheered when members of the Co-ordinating Committee read out their grievances and booed when things favourable to the transport company were said.

A week after the committee of enquiry's visit, the Minister of Transport issued a press statement appealing 'most strongly' to all commuters to 'terminate' the boycott.

Schoeman suggested 'in order to ensure ongoing communication' that a joint transport liaison committee be set up consisting of representatives from the Zululand Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of In-

dustries, the Afrikaanse Sakekamer, the KwaZulu government, the Local Authorities and local chiefs.

No mention was made of the Co-ordinating Committee elected by the boycotters.

The Minister also said that he would be taking the necessary steps 'to ensure compliance with the Transportation Act'.

In practice, this would mean prosecution of taxi owners who continued to assist in providing transport.

Understandably, the statement was greeted with alarm by the Co-ordinating Committee which demanded an immediate meeting with Schoeman.

Soon after the demand for a meeting was made, the Minister released a further press statement which added the Co-ordinating Committee to the

suggested joint liaison committee and withdrew the threat of prosecution under the Transportation Act.

At the Cape Town meeting on February 25, according to a member of the Co-ordinating Committee, Schoeman agreed in principle to the boycotters' demand that other bus companies be allowed to operate in the area.

The Minister also agreed that there should be an agreement negotiated between the commuters and the bus company.

On February 28, the Co-ordinating Committee once again met the department of Transport's Emile Nicsh where it demanded that the 1984 fares remain in force and that the Minister actively promote competition from other bus companies.

It also demanded that taxi drivers be allowed to operate freely between Empangeni and Richards Bay — at present they are only allowed to operate legally within the townships.

And any future bus company should commit itself to the social welfare of the communities, the committee demanded.

As FOSATU Worker News went to press, the boycott was continuing while commuters waited for a response to the demands.

'Although, the present transport arrangements are adequate, they are certainly not comfortable,' a Richards Bay worker said.

'But we do not care whether they are comfortable or not as long as we achieve our objective — a more satisfactory transport service,' he added.



Metal and Allied Workers Union president, Jeffrey Vilane, speaks to 5 000 people at a boycott meeting in Esikhwini