

FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



NOVEMBER 1985 No. 43

It is always sad when an era comes to an end. Today FOSATU Worker News bids farewell to FOSATU in this its last issue.

But for workers this should not be a time of sadness but rather a time of great joy. Because at the same time as we bid farewell to FOSATU, we welcome a new and greater federation — a federation which brings us closer to our goal of a united South African working class.

When FOSATU was formed in April 1979 it only had a signed up membership of 16 000, whereas the new federation will have a membership of close on 500 000.

But the road to this unity has been a long and tough one.

Way back in August 1981 at Langa near Cape Town, the first unity meeting was held.

The thirteen union groupings present took resolutions condemning banning and detentions and the formation of the Ciskei. The unions also agreed to establish committees 'to discuss and initiate solidarity action'.

Things looked promising and at FOSATU's 1982 Congress, the federation decided that it would disband if 'a greater and more powerful non-racial and democratic federation' were to be formed.

The congress resolution noted that FOSATU had been established to bring about unity amongst all workers in South Africa.

It said that 'many other democratic non-racial unions, some of whom were not in existence at the time of FOSATU's formation, are now expressing interest in solidarity and unity'.

The Congress resolved to continue with 'the aim of building a united working class movement'.

However, divisions plagued the unity talks and it was not until April 1983 at Athlone, that seven union groupings committed themselves to the formation of a new federation.

A feasibility committee

was formed which set about the task of drawing up a draft constitution of the new federation.

Not all the unions which are now coming in to the new federation were represented on that feasibility committee but a move to widen the unity was made at the Ipelegeng meeting in June this year.

This meeting paved the way for the formation of a new 'super' federation containing the majority of this country's progressive unions.

At its Inaugural Congress in a few days time in Durban some 36 unions will affiliate to this federation.

This historical event will be attended by over 800 del-

egates from all the corners of South Africa. This will be the biggest worker congress ever held in the history of this country.

Apart from electing the president, vice-presidents and the general secretary, the delegates will also be discussing a wide range of resolutions.

The resolutions cover things like:

- the operations of multinational corporations in South Africa;
- the federation's international policy;
- the current State of Emergency;
- May Day;
- Women's oppression;

TURN TO BACK PAGE



The workers' struggle marches
FORWARD

NUTW condemns 'senseless' detentions

AT 5 am on Monday October 28, Virginia Engel, the Western Cape branch secretary of the National Union of Textile Workers, was detained at her home.

NUTW responded immediately with anger and determination and in less than three days had won her release.

Virginia Engel's detention was just one of the many actions that have been taken by police and security force against Western Cape communities since the State of Emergency was announced there on October 26.

Hundreds of people have been detained in pre-dawn raids. Thousands of schoolchildren, youth and adults have been arrested (5 119 by early November). Many have been badly beaten while in the hands of the police.

And at least 69 people have died as a result of police action. A Table Bay Spinners worker was shot and killed on his way to work by police firing randomly at township residents.

Workers returning home from shifts are harassed and are never sure that they will get home safely or find their families safe when they get

there.

For months the NUTW offices have been flooded with people coming to complain about police actions. Statements have been taken and charges have been laid.

Up till now, management have done little to protest against the police action which is affecting their employees.

However, the union campaign to secure the release of Virginia Engel drew in the companies where NUTW is strongly organised.

NUTW's branch executive at a joint meeting with their managements demanded:

- that the companies jointly buy space in a local popular newspaper protesting Virginia's detention and demanding her release;

- that they telex the Minister or Commissioner of Police and demand her immediate release;
- that the companies call a meeting with the Chamber of Industry to discuss the State of Emergency and the detentions with a delegation from the local unions.

The union said that by Wednesday October 30 — the day Virginia Engel was released — the companies had al-

ready taken most of these steps.

Some had already sent telexes to the Chamber of Industry and the Commissioner of Police by Tuesday afternoon and by Wednesday they had met together and issued a joint statement to both.

The companies' telexes stated that Virginia's detention posed a serious threat to the continued 'sound labour relations' and industrial peace.

They also stated that they deplore the practice of detention without trial and would make a strong appeal for the application of the rule of law.

In a statement to FOSATU Worker News, NUTW said while it welcomed her release it did not accept the 'arbitrary and senseless' detention of trade unionists, union members, and others in the communities.

'The union utterly rejects and condemns detention for detentions sake and all other forms of mindless brutality being used by the police and the State against legitimate organisation.'

'The senselessness and pointlessness of these actions is clearly shown by the fact that



Virginia Engel (right) with NUTW's vice-president, Tini Sikota

Virginia Engel was never asked any questions or charged with any offence. We can only conclude that this action was simply a mindless demonstration of arbitrary and unchecked powers of the State,' the statement said.

NUTW said it was now committed to working for the re-

lease of those trade unionists and others still in detention like: NUTW member from SBH Cotton mills, John Rafisa; Rev Marawu from the General Workers Union; Tozama Tsolo from the South African Allied Workers Union; Maggie Wilson and Lizzie Pike from Food and Canning Workers Union.

FOSATU turns down Minister's invitation

FOSATU has told the Minister of Manpower, Pietie du Plessis, that it is obvious that the government 'is unable to open any meaningful dialogue that will lead to the radical changes that our society so desperately needs to rescue it from the present crisis'.

FOSATU was responding to an invitation to have talks with the Minister of Manpower, Pietie du Plessis, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pik Botha, on December 9 in Pretoria.

In the letter drafted at the federation's last Executive Committee meeting, FOSATU says that as a trade union federation it is 'fully aware of the benefits of dialogue and negotiation' however 'we wish to advise you of our refusal to accept the invitation.'

FOSATU's refusal to attend the talks comes at a time when the government is desperately trying to find credible black leaders to assist it in its process of 'reform'.

The federation's letter states 'quite categorically' that FOSATU is not prepared to talk 'to yourselves or the government that you represent'.

'Your government is being extremely presumptuous in expecting to talk to people when it governs not by consent but by the virtue of declaration of civil war on the black people of this country.'

'Your government has quite clearly made itself totally unacceptable to the members of FOSATU and the majority of the people of South Africa,' the letter concludes.

Food unions to merge next year

IT looks like a new food union is all set to be formed in the new year with a probable membership of close on 50 000 in over 250 factories nationwide.

SFAWU general secretary, Jay Naidoo said the constitution for the new union had been completed and that it would be launched at a congress early next year.

Talks between the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union and the Food and Canning Workers Union have been going on for some time.

The National Executive

Committees of SFAWU and FCWU have been meeting since November last year.

More recently, the merger talks have been joined by Cape Town's Retail and Allied Workers Union.

And the three unions are still hoping to bring in the food sectors of the general unions coming into the new federation.

Commenting on the importance of the new union, Brother Naidoo said the food industry in South Africa was increasingly being dominated by a few

large companies.

'The new food union by uniting workers will put them into a more powerful position to challenge the bosses on issues like a living wage,' he said.

He said that there was a strong commitment among workers to the formation of a one national industrial union.

'Workers are now seeing that unity is not just a dream but is a reality,' he added.

Meanwhile, merger talks between the Transport and General Workers Union and the

General Workers Union are still moving swiftly.

TGWU general secretary, Jane Barrett said the unions had drawn up amendments to TGWU's constitution and that they would also probably merge early next year.

She added that there had also been meetings with other federation unions in the municipal sector — the Municipal and General Workers Union, the Cape Town Municipal Workers Association and the Municipal Workers Union of South Africa.

ICEF shows interest in South Africa

TWO unionists from the Chemical Workers Industrial Union at the beginning of this month travelled to Hannover, Germany, to a world conference organised by the International Federation of Chemical, Energy and General Workers' Unions (ICEF).

CWIU general secretary, Rod Crompton, and the senior steward at SA Tiioxide, Mandla Sindane, both spoke at the conference which was attended by ICEF affiliates from 35 countries worldwide.

Speaking after his return, Rod Crompton, said the conference had shown 'a great deal of interest in the South Africa and they were particularly interested to hear about the workers' struggle'.

At the conference, he said, he had gained a better picture of the situation of unions in other countries and also of countries where unions are not permitted like the Middle East.

'The Middle East is rapidly becoming a new centre of chemical production. But unions are not allowed there. This presents a real problem for chemical workers through-

out the world because the multinationals that are setting themselves up in the Middle East are the same ones that we deal with,' he added.

Soon after the conference, the CWIU hosted a visit to South Africa by a member of the secretariat of the ICEF, Jim Catterson.

Jim Catterson met with local progressive unions operating in the industrial sectors covered by the ICEF and also spoke to CWIU members in Port Elizabeth, Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg.



Mandla Sindane speaking at the ICEF Conference

No pay no work, say workers

IT IS astounding the lengths that management will go merely to enforce a principle.

Recently at Jacobs factory, Romatex, workers stopped work when management pinned up a notice which incorrectly reflected the state of ongoing wage negotiations with the National Union of Textile Workers.

Two hours later management agreed that they had made a mistake and apologised but

they refused to pay the workers for the time that they had not been working.

Romatex said the company policy was 'No work, No pay'.

Workers decided to counter this with their own principle — 'No pay, No work' — and for five days they clocked in in the morning, went to the canteen, and then clocked out in the afternoon. They even took lunch times as usual.

On the fifth day of the strike Romatex called in union organiser, Elias Banda, and after some lengthy negotiations decided to compromise on their principle. They agreed to pay the workers for half of the five days that they had not been working.

For Romatex management it proved to be a costly principle — there is a big difference between two hours' wages and two-and-a-half days' wages.

Strikers start T shirt project to raise funds for their struggle

WORKERS who used to produce conveyer belts, hosepipes and various other industrial rubber products at BTR Sarmcol are now turning their hands to silkscreening T shirts.

After only one weekend's training, six volunteers (the group has now expanded to 14) began the mammoth task of producing Inaugural Congress T shirts.

They started off pretty slowly — on the first day they only produced 33. But within a day or two they were turning out about 200 a day.

The silkscreening project is an experiment set up by the Sarmcol strikers. If it is successful they hope to start a workers' co-operative in order to raise funds for their struggle.

In this way the strikers hope to become less dependant on outside funds for their continuing battle against BTR Sarmcol.

When the Sarmcol Workers' Co-operative is set up, workers who become members will be entitled: to receive the weekly food parcel; to buy goods more cheaply; and to receive medical, educational and other assistance.

In return co-op members will have to agree to work on any of its projects. They will not be paid any wages, instead all the money earned in the projects will be deposited into a central fund.

As well as the T shirt project, the workers are looking into the possibility of baking bread, keeping poultry and growing vegetables.

Other Metal and Allied Workers Union members have agreed to build office and factory buildings for the co-op for free — only the materials would have to be provided.

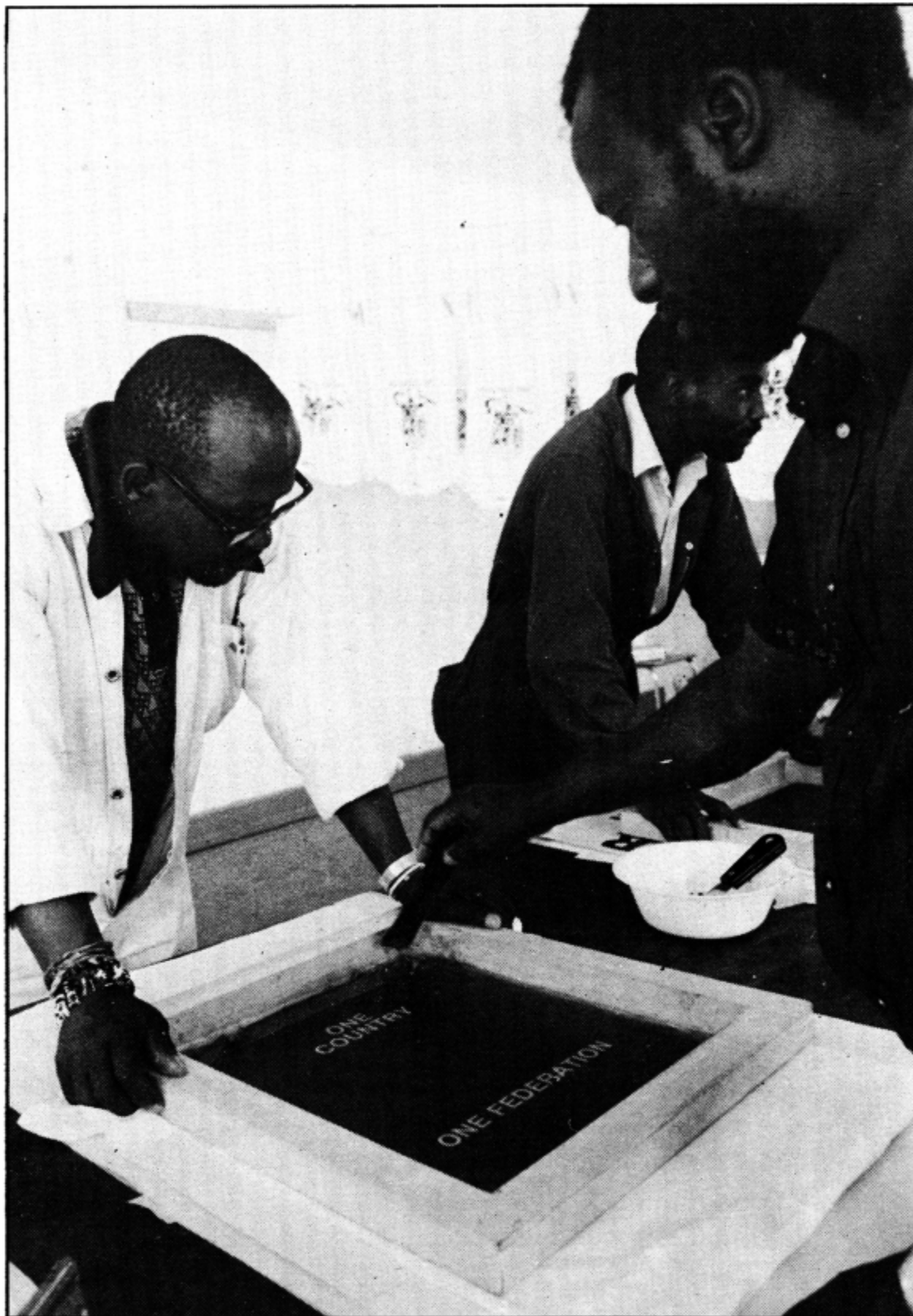
The Sarmcol workers are now looking for some land outside Mpophomeni to set up a community centre, a clinic, an educational centre and a small light industrial factory.

A constitution has already been drafted for the co-op although the final decision on whether to go ahead will only be made early next year.

The co-op's main principles will be:

- democratic control by workers over all areas of decision making;
- the development of individual and collective capabilities to their maximum potential.
- the division of all surpluses according to the actual needs of the members of the co-op.
- the elimination of all forms of labour divisions which hinder worker control and democracy.
- the elimination of all forms of discrimination.

FOSATU Worker News re-



Sarmcol workers silkscreening a Congress T shirt

cently spoke to Philip Dladla, who was the senior shop steward at Sarmcol, about the co-op.

When did you decide to form the co-op?

We started to consider forming it after the call-off of the consumer boycott. We thought that the next step would be to start a co-op in order to assist the strikers.

How was it to assist the strikers?

Firstly the co-op could be used to bring them all together rather than being scattered. And also it would assist in raising money for food parcels. Our eyes are still focussed on getting back in at Sarmcol but in

the meantime we have to do something.

Where did the idea of a co-op come from?

The union organisers and the shop stewards came together to consider what should be the next step. There were a lot of suggestions. We also called a workshop of shop stewards plus other people that could assist us. At that time we were thinking of a candle making co-op and an agricultural co-op. We dropped the candle co-op as we felt it would not give us an effective boosting. The candles would be sold cheap and therefore would not raise too much funds. We then thought we would start with a T shirt and a

poultry co-op.

How did you go about starting these up?

We looked into where we could get the ready made materials, and the cost involved in making the T shirts, and the market for them. After considering these parts we felt we could start with this.

How were you going to acquire the skills needed?

We asked a chap from outside to give us some training. People acquired the skills very quickly, over a weekend.

How many people work in the T shirt project?

There are 14 people working. In a general meeting of Sarmcol workers we asked for

volunteers and these people came forward. They get no pay. Who decides who does what?

Every morning we meet and sit down and discuss the problems that have come up and see how we are going to solve these problems. And at the end of the day we also discuss whether there have been any problems. What kind of problems?

At the beginning we did not really know how many people we really needed. We found we were short of people as we only started with six. And in some of the sections we found that some equipment needed to be bought. We started with only one iron and ironing board so we went out to buy more. Also, we didn't have any hair dryers so it took a long time for the shirts to dry. When do the workers change their jobs?

Each day you do a different job. It works in rotation. The people putting the T shirts on the boards go to ironing and the ironing people take over their jobs. And the people doing the screen printing change over — the one holding the screen goes on to printing.

What are the advantages of that?

People get the feel of what screen printing involves. And if one of them is sick we will have no problems as everybody knows each of the jobs. It also stops boredom. Ironing is the most boring of the jobs so we have to change around more often.

What are the differences from the way you work now to the way you worked in the factory? Firstly we are all involved in the planning not just the bosses. There is also nobody to chase you like supervisors. Instead we watch each other. The workers understand what is going on and they say to each other that you mustn't work like this. As a result we have very few reject T shirts — only ones that have got finger marks on. Also, the people in the co-op are learning all the time to do different jobs, not like in the factory where you do the same job all the time.

The only thing that has hindered production is the equipment not the people. If we had more screens and a more open place we would be able to do much more. And then these people who are working here would be able to train others.

STOP PRESS: Sarmcol are opposing the Metal and Allied Workers Union's application for a Conciliation Board (CB). MAWU has to apply for a CB in order to take the matter to the industrial court. Earlier in the dispute the company suggested the union should take it to the industrial court, however it now looks like it has changed its mind and is trying to prevent the dispute ever getting to the court.

Farm Fare workers handed back forms they were forced to sign

THE forms which Farm Fare workers were forced to sign after they were locked-out last month have been handed back to the workers for them to destroy.

On October 14, about 500 workers at the company's Wynberg plant arrived at work to find the gate locked. Management then proceeded to only

allow workers who had signed forms agreeing to new conditions of service in to the plant.

This episode occurred in the midst of wage negotiations with the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union where Farm Fare's final offer of R9,30 per week carried the provision that workers must agree to compuls-

ory overtime and extended working hours.

In negotiations after the lock-out, Farm Fare agreed to withdraw the forms and in future to negotiate overtime with the union shop stewards.

SFAWU's David Makgema said 'For the time being we have agreed that overtime will

not be more than one hour per day and that shop stewards should be informed of any further need for overtime so that alternative suggestions can be made.'

'We have also worked out suitable working hours. According to the new schedule we have negotiated, people will

work one hour less on Fridays. Before they used to stagger hours and some people found themselves working up to 6 pm,' he added.

Meanwhile, at Farm Fare's factory at Peters in Natal, 450 workers went on strike for two-and-a-half days towards the end of last month after a driver was dismissed.



Management could depend on the police to 'solve' strikes during the 70's and early 80's — this photo was taken during the Johannesburg municipal workers' strike in 1980

In 1973 a wave of strikes hit Durban in which 100 000 African and Indian workers took part. The strikes were a turning point in the workers struggle in South Africa. Businessmen openly expressed fears that this would mean the end of the 'low wage economy'. Workers found new hope. New unions were formed in Natal and in Johannesburg (where a smaller strike among bus drivers had broken out in 1972). This was the birth of a more organised and militant trade unionism which has now found expression in the new federation. In this article we ask where did it come from? Along what road has it travelled?

After the crushing of SACTU in the early 1960's there was little organised worker activity for nearly 10 years. For example, the number of strikes for the whole country dropped to 16 or 17 a year. However important changes were taking place which were creating a more aggressive and more confident working class. In the late 1950's to early 1960's, the Nationalist government had taken two important measures to try and establish control over workers. Firstly it had built to-

day's big African townships for permanent residents in the towns. Secondly, it used influx control to force new workers to work on contract and to live in hostels. As a result by 1970, 60 percent of the African workforce in South Africa was migrant.

Both groups became more and more dissatisfied in the 1960's. From the early to mid 1960's the government spent almost no money on the townships (on housing, schools etc). Conditions deteriorated and people grew more and more dissatisfied. In addition influx control forced more and more workers into the already overcrowded reserves. Migrant labourers were no longer able to cultivate land on any scale in the reserves, and increasingly spent only two to four weeks at home each year on their annual leave. Living standards were declining. Migrants' families were getting poorer. In the early 1970's prices also rose and wages stood still. Both migrants and 'permanent' residents began demanding increases in pay. Nowhere were there any channels through which workers could voice their demands. A

few factories had toothless works committees which had been set up by employers; the vast majority did not have even this. Workers therefore took matters into their own hands and in 1972-1974 went on strike. The employers were stunned. Workers often did not even elect committees, and leaders were kept secret. The employers therefore had to sack everybody or nobody at all. Because the factories had become more mechanical (ie more advanced machines had been introduced) in the 1960's and many black workers had moved into semi-skilled jobs, most employers were unwilling to sack large numbers of their workers. They therefore gave wage increases of up to 20 percent right across South Africa and workers returned to their jobs.

Workers were overjoyed, especially in Natal. Thousands flocked in to join the new unions that were formed at this time (the Metal and Allied Workers Union, the National Union of Textile Workers, the Chemical Workers Industrial Union, the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa). However workers soon found that it was easier to win occasional in-

creases of pay through an unexpected strike, than it was to get recognition for a union in the plant. The NUTW won a recognition and procedural agreement at the Smith and Nephew company in Natal, but almost everywhere else the employers took a hard line. Shop stewards were victimised and companies did everything in their power to block recognition. Many workers became disillusioned and dropped out of the trade unions. For those that remained it became essential to develop strong factory floor leadership and organisation if they were to survive. This practice is one of the strongest traditions handed down to today's unions from this period. It is one of the features of the new federation which marks it off most clearly from TUCSA and the 'white' federations.

Three main groups of trade unions developed in this period. These were the Natal-based Trade Union Advisory and Coordinating Council (TUACC), the Transvaal-based Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions (CCOBTU) and the Cape Town-based General Workers Union

(GWU). TUACC was a tightly organised group, which adopted a strong working class and non-racial position. CCOBTU was a very loose group, with black consciousness leanings. The General Workers Union was a general union which to begin with confined itself to no specific industrial centre. In addition to these groupings there were at least two other important registered unions (African workers at this time were not allowed to join registered unions) who were moving in a militant direction. The National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers of South Africa (NUMARWOSA) in Port Elizabeth and Pretoria and the Food and Canning Workers Union in the Cape. Both of these organised African workers in separate non-registered unions.

Most of these unions used a similar strategy. Strong factory floor organisation, and a concentration on foreign companies who might be more easily forced to grant recognition because of union pressure overseas. A few successes were scored at Ford, SKF (to a lesser extent Defy and elsewhere) but these gains were hard won and progress was slow. Gradually, however, this pressure forced the government and the employers to consider some kind of limited recognition to trade unions. The Soweto uprising confirmed the government in this opinion, and in 1977 the Wiehahn Commission was appointed to consider labour reforms.

The Wiehahn Commission Report, and the new labour law which the government then passed opened a new era of trade unionism in South Africa. Unions realised even before the Commission that important changes might be made and began talks about forming a new federation. These dragged on for two years because of hostility in the Transvaal between the

The W C

making of the WORKING CLASS

This last part of the worker history series looks at the period 1973 up till now

Transvaal wing of the non-racial group TUACC and the black consciousness leaning CCOBTU. Eventually four Transvaal unions split from CCOBTU to join the new federation (FOSATU) which was inaugurated on 13-15 April 1979. FOSATU was a tightly organised federation and was the first truly national federation for black workers since the crushing of SACTU 15 years earlier. It was committed to one union for each industry and soon a number of mergers took place between affiliates to achieve this end (NAAWU was a product of one of these).

It was not however, the only federation. A year later the CCOBTU re-organised itself into the (still very loose) Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA). In addition a new wave of unionisation was taking place in which more community orientated general unions were emerging. The most important of these was the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU) which was based mainly in East London to begin with. Others were the General and Allied Workers Union (GAWU) and the General Workers Union of South Africa (GWUSA).

The Wiehahn Report, and new labour laws, opened up opportunities for all these groups which they used in quite different ways. The new legislation allowed Africans to form registered trade unions, but to begin with the government tried to exclude migrant workers from such unions and to prohibit non-racial unions. FOSATU unions decided to apply for registration, provided that both of these restrictions were removed. A little later CUSA unions also decided to register. The general unions however bitterly attacked these decisions and argued that this placed these unions under government

control.

In the end both the migrant and racial restrictions were lifted by the government and the registered unions found that registration opened up new space for them to organise in. As a result black trade union membership rose from 70 000 (mostly paid up) in 1979 to 200 000 in 1982 (most of which had paid their dues). In the same period successful strikes hit many sectors of industry. Most of these were illegal, but strikers were usually no longer prosecuted as they had been in the past. Some of the most important of these were the rolling wave of pension strikes in 1981 which caused the government to withdraw new pension laws for Africans. A limited freedom to strike was won. Equally important, recognition agreements which secured basic worker rights in the factory (stop orders, shop steward rights, protection from arbitrary dismissal) became increasingly common. By 1984 over 500 of these had been signed.

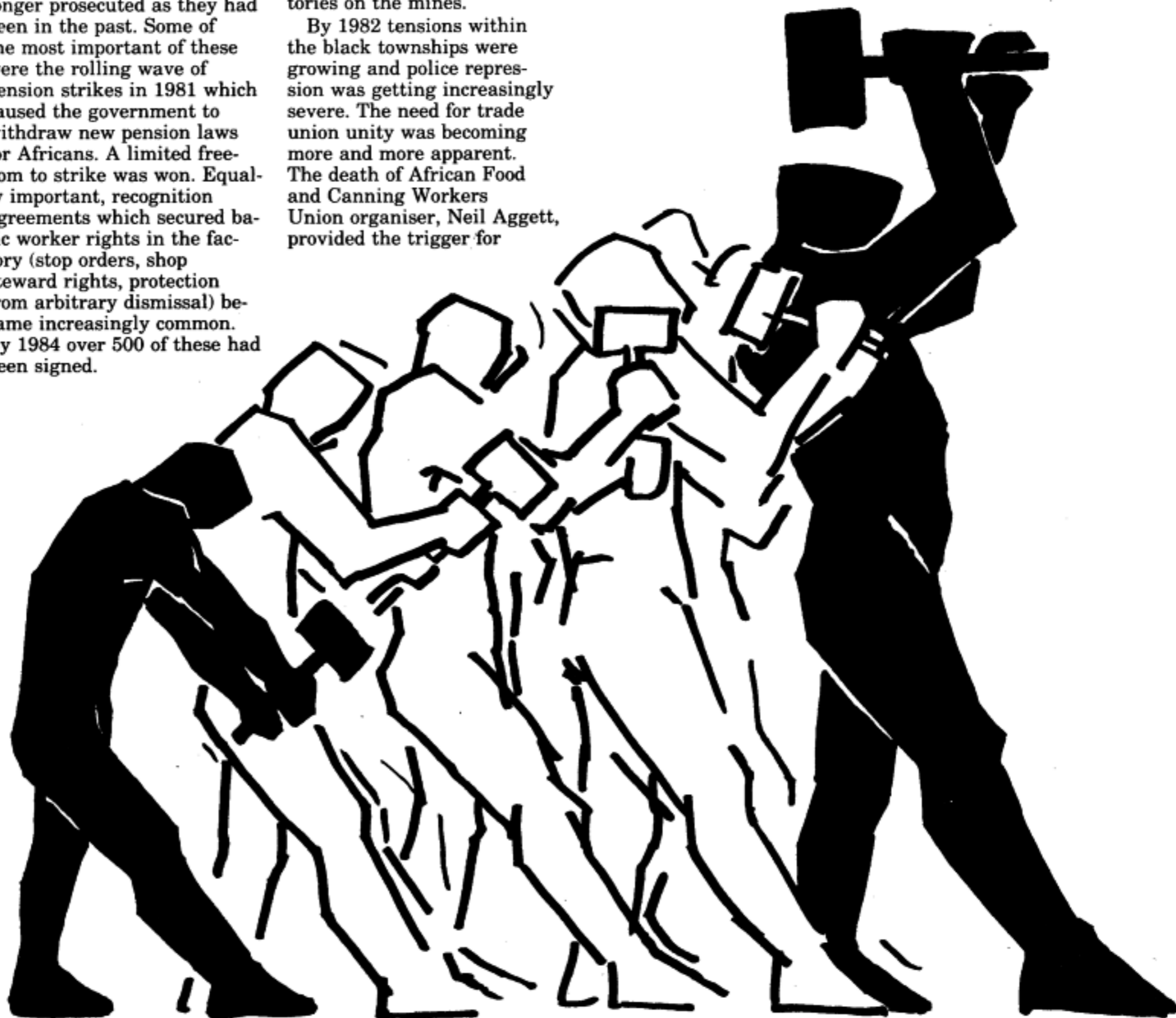
One of the most important features about this new phase of worker organisation was the militancy of migrant workers. These were very active in the 1981-2 strikes on the East Rand. They were also the backbone of the most powerful new union to make its appearance in this period, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Formed in 1982, the NUM recruited 90 000 members in the space of two years, and won a number of major victories on the mines.

By 1982 tensions within the black townships were growing and police repression was getting increasingly severe. The need for trade union unity was becoming more and more apparent. The death of African Food and Canning Workers Union organiser, Neil Aggett, provided the trigger for

unity. At a unity meeting in April 1982, the first really serious effort was made to lay down a basis for negotiations. Over the following three years, lengthy discussions took place which will be finally successful when the new federation forms at the end of this month.

With the exception of the formation of the new federation, the years 1982-5 were difficult ones for trade unions. The recession became gradually more severe, and hundreds of thousands of

workers were retrenched or placed on short-time. The police presence in the townships became steadily more oppressive. Unions did surprisingly well in this situation. Membership either stayed stable or increased. Some protection against the worst effects of retrenchment was given by the signing of recognition agreements. The Transvaal unions showed their strength on community/political issues in the two day stayaway of November 1984.



National talks

THIS year for the first time, workers from the three Pilkington/Shatterprufe plants organised by the Chemical Workers Union came together for national negotiations.

The settlement included: the equalisation of the minimum wage to R3,04 per hour; an increased annual bonus of four weeks' wages; an improved long service allowance; an improved shift allowance at two plants; and extra public holidays, including May Day.

The CWIU said it saw the joint negotiations as a step forward in the 'creation of national unity and co-ordination of workers in South Africa'.

Above inflation

IN the middle of a recession, the Chemical Workers Industrial Union has signed two wage agreements for 1986 which will ensure across-the-board increases way above the inflation rate.

At Henkel, minimum wages have been increased by 19 percent from R100 to R119 per week.

In addition, female members have been guaranteed three months maternity leave to be paid at the rate of 20 percent of the wage for workers with over one year's service and 33 percent for workers with over three year's service.

And at Bavaloid in Pinetown, minimum wages have been increased by 34,6 percent from R103 to R138,66 per week.

Also, the service allowance has been increased from R1 to R2 per week per year of service and May Day has been recognised by the company — workers may take it as a day of paid or unpaid leave.

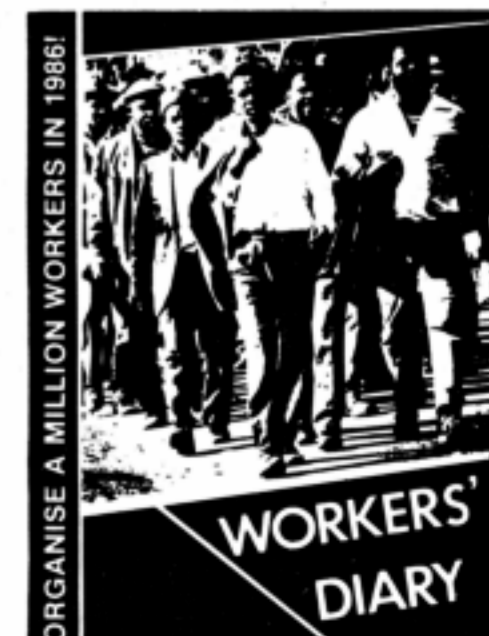
Beckett strike

Three hundred and fifty workers at Isando factory, TW Beckett, went on strike on November 4 after they found out that the personnel officer was selling jobs for R550.

The workers are also demanding the reinstatement of the senior shop steward and another colleague who were recently sacked for 'relatively petty matters'.

They went on strike after TW Beckett's managing director ignored a seven-day ultimatum to respond to their demands. On November 5 management dismissed all the strikers.

As FOSATU Worker News went to print, there was no end in sight to the three-week-old strike.



ORGANISE A MILLION WORKERS IN 1986
WORKERS' DIARY
This attractive 1986 Workers' Diary is available from Raven Press, P O Box 31134, Braamfontein 2017, at the special price of R2,50 for workers.

Mine hostel manager plots to have shaft steward 'burned'

A GRUESOME plot to have the tendons of the National Union of Mineworkers' branch chairman at Gencor's Marievale mine cut off so that he would not be able to walk again or have him 'burned' has been uncovered by the union.

It was uncovered by an NUM member at the mine who played along with assistant hostel manager, Frans Spamer, in order to get as much information as possible about the plot.

Using a concealed tape, Exstuart Zwelakhe was able to record assistant hostel manager, Frans Spamer, asking him to use a kierre to 'f*ck up' Solomon Mlungisi Nelani, NUM's branch chairman, 'in such a way that he cannot walk again'.

The tape recording was crucial evidence in a recent Supreme Court case in which NUM was granted a temporary order preventing Spamer and an induna at the mine from assaulting or harming in any way NUM members at the mine.

Captured on the tape is Spamer explaining to Zwelakhe how he must cut Nelani's tendons so 'he won't be able to walk for f*cking nine months'.

'And you take an ear and cut it off and then the ear you bring it back with you and we put it in the boiler and that's all you do.'

Later on in the tape, Spamer tells Zwelakhe that he must 'f*ck him up totally...even if you can f*ck'n well burn him'.



A hostel at the Marievale mine

Spamer also speaks of putting together a team of four or five people to 'catch' union leaders one by one at night and 'f*ck them up totally'.

'You go in to the hostel maybe on Tuesday night and get one and f*ck him up totally. F*ck him up here in the hostel. Maybe on Thursday night get another one. F*ck him up. You see then these others they will run away....Don't kill them just f*ck them up,' Spamer says on the tape.

In his affidavit handed in to the court, Zwelakhe tells of how he was recruited by Spamer to assist in the plot. Spamer did not know he was a union member.

Towards the end of September, he says, Spamer called him to his office and asked him to tell him whenever he heard

anything about the NUM.

'Spamer said there was a man named Solomon who had caused all the trouble at Marievale....He said that if I ever saw Solomon around the mines I must assault him or kill him if possible.'

In October, Zwelakhe says, Solomon Nelani came to Spamer's office. 'Shortly after this, Spamer said he wanted to lay charges against Solomon because he had sworn at him. He said we must try and provoke him so that he would assault us and then Spamer would then be able to charge him and take him to court.'

'Spamer kept on saying to me when I saw him that if I saw Solomon I must 'send him away'. Because of our previous discussions I understood by this that I must kill Solomon,' Zwelakhe says.

Unilever's conscience not enough!

ON a recent visit to South Africa, Sir Kenneth Durham, the chairman of giant British-based multinational Unilever, said that his company did not need a code of conduct because 'I have a thing called a conscience and so has my top management'.

Soon after he had said this, workers at Unilever subsidiary, Texport, at Wadeville went on strike for two weeks after management changed the job descriptions of three of their colleagues. The job changes meant extra work without extra pay.

During the strike, workers at another Unilever subsidiary, S & CI, staged a sympathy stoppage. Both plants are organised by the Chemical Workers Industrial Union.

A union spokesperson said the dispute was 'long and protracted with neither side wanting to give in' but eventually a settlement was reached whereby the workers could choose either to move back to their original jobs or receive a R100 per month increase.

Sir Kenneth, it doesn't look like a conscience is enough for your company, judging from Unilever's practices here in South Africa!

Printpak strike wins reinstatement

THE strike at Kohler's Printpak Gravure at Industria has ended with the reinstatement of Cyril Ruhlase who was sacked when he refused to do two jobs at the same time.

For eight days during their two-and-a-half week strike, workers occupied the factory and slept in the changing rooms.

Shop steward Royal Lekoba told FOSATU Worker News that for the first three nights they had had no blankets but then workers decided to go

home and fetch blankets.

'Food and money was brought by relatives everyday. We shared this among everybody because some of the workers are from the homelands,' he said.

'On Monday October 14, management called in the shop stewards and said they were going to apply for an eviction order. We told them that if they used force to evict us we would retaliate. This shocked them so they never applied for an eviction order,' he added.

Unions threaten action over migrant workers

THE National Union of Mineworkers' decision to take strike action if the government goes ahead with plans to return migrant workers to their home countries has been backed by the Chemical Workers Industrial Union.

Earlier this month it was revealed that the State Security Council had recommended a phased return of South Africa's 1.5 million migrant workers — most of these work on the mines.

In a statement released on November 11, the Minister of Manpower, Pietie du Plessis, said the repatriation of migrant workers was essential 'as part of the government's over all long and short-term strategy

for relieving unemployment in the face of disinvestment, sanctions and boycotts'.

In recent months, governments from Britain, USA, European countries, and the commonwealth countries have been considering what action should be taken in order to force South Africa to remove apartheid.

Although they have stopped short of barring trade with this country, some measures have been introduced in order to step up the pressure on the South African government.

In response to the Minister of Manpower's statement, the NUM said 'threats to repatriate migrant workers....will not be taken lightly by the union'.

Soon after the mine workers had begun to return to work at Marievale, Zwelakhe met Solomon Nelani and told him exactly what Spamer had said. Nelani told him that he must report this to NUM.

On November 9, after discussions with the union's attorneys and NUM office bearers, Zwelakhe went to work as usual but this time armed with a tape recorder to record any discussions he had with Spamer or anybody else involved in the plot.

As well as the conversation with Spamer, Zwelakhe also taped two conversations with Mpinga, a mine induna, who was also part of the plan to assault or kill union leaders.

Mpinga told Zwelakhe that he wanted to form a group to kill union members at Marievale.

'The people specifically named as those to be attacked included Nelani and the senior shaft steward, Ferguson Nofotoyela....Mpinga said we could plan to carry out the attacks at bioscope time when there were few people about,' Zwelakhe says in his affidavit.

On November 12, the Supreme Court granted the union a temporary order preventing Frans Spamer and Mpinga from doing 'any act which is directed at or intending to cause the death of or bodily harm' of shaft stewards Solomon Nelani and Ferguson Nofotoyela or to any member of the NUM.

In the last issue of FOSATU Worker News we saw that in feudal society most education was done by the family. The serfs learnt how to farm the land from their parents. The few church schools were mainly for the sons of rich traders and nobles. But, as traders began to look for new ways of making profit, society began to change.

The traders, and some of the farmers who had become rich by selling their produce, set up factories. As a result a new class of people began to emerge — people who made profit by employing others to work for them. This was the capitalist class. Large numbers of serfs (or peasants) left their land and flocked to the new towns to work in the factories. This was the beginning of the working class.

At first, the capitalists needed workers with very few technical skills. In England, the main industry was the textile industry. This industry made huge profits by using cheap, unskilled labour (mainly women and children) who worked long hours in horrific conditions. At a very young age children were placed in the factories or mines to work.

Educating workers and the poor was one of the last things that interested the capitalists. Generally, the capitalists do not like spending money on education because they cannot make profits by teaching people. Capitalists only benefit from education if it makes workers more productive.

For a time, the two different economic systems, feudalism and capitalism, survived side by side. But a point was reached when this situation could no longer continue. The capitalists found that the laws passed by the church and the kings did not suit them. As they became more powerful they began to challenge the political power of the churches and kings and queens. They did this by struggling for the right to form a parliament.

The parliament became the most important political body in the country. Although very few people had the vote (workers were not allowed to vote), parliaments were seen as being far more democratic. Most importantly for the capitalist class, these parliaments had the power to pass laws. With these laws, society (and education) could be

more easily controlled.

Over time, the capitalist class saw the need for more education. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, the capitalists were scared of the mass of workers in the towns who might revolt at any time and disrupt production. Secondly, by the 1850s capitalist industry was becoming more mechanised. Greater amounts of machinery were used in the production of goods. Workers needed skills to operate these machines.

So, the government began to get involved with education. This was the beginning of capitalist education as we know it today. The central government now governed education throughout England. Education grew as the capitalist class itself grew in power.

In 1870, the English Education Act was passed in England. This Act allowed the government to establish schools which could be more easily controlled than the church schools. By 1900 all children under 14 years of age had to attend these schools. They were called Elementary Schools.

The government only began to provide secondary and high schools when it became clear that a more skilled, technically trained working class was needed for capitalist production to grow further.

The capitalists and government realised that education could be used to control the working class. They could direct them to think in certain ways by controlling what children learnt at school. Education could also teach children the basics of what was needed to learn a skill to work in capitalist industry, and also that it was important to work for the capitalists.

Today, in capitalist countries the situation has not changed. Working class children still receive an education which prepares them for their role as workers. This is if they receive any formal education at all! Many people say that education for the working class has got worse. One of the reasons for this is that the capitalist economy in most countries can no longer provide enough jobs for those who have been to school.

Education in South Africa has followed a very similar path to education in other capitalist countries. Before the British and Dutch arrived in South

Africa, children were taught by their parents how to farm and survive. So most education was through the family. The army regiments of the different chiefdoms, provided another type of education where people were taught how to fight. Attitudes and beliefs were not governed by the church. They were passed on from generation to generation by stories and songs etc. They were part of tribal customs.

The first school in South Africa was started for slaves in the Cape by the Dutch. Slaves were taught the basics of the Dutch language and about Christianity. By 1685, there were two schools — one was for slaves and the other was for the children of the colonists. So, from very early, formal education in South Africa was divided along class lines.

When the British took control of the Cape from the Dutch in 1815 they were more interested in settling permanently. After gold and diamonds were discovered in the Orange Free State and Transvaal at the end of the 1800s this became even more important. Education under British colonialism was left mainly to the church through mission schools. Very few people attended these schools. They provided education for the privileged few who became members of the black middle class.

Formal education for most people in South Africa has developed very slowly. We only have to look around us today to see that most people do not receive an adequate education. As the manufacturing economy grew in the 1930s and 1940s the need for more organised education grew. In 1953 the Bantu Education Act was passed. This Act said that all schools for Africans had to be registered with the government. Almost all the mission schools closed down. The Minister of Native Affairs, H F Verwoerd said that there was no place for the African 'above the level of certain forms of labour'.

Education for Africans was placed under the control of the Department of Native Affairs and was of a far lower standard than for the sons and daughters of the ruling class. Much less money was spent on educating black working class children.

After the fast growth of the economy in the 1960s, the need for a different type of education in South Africa grew. With the investment of money in machinery the bosses and the government encouraged more technical education. Big capitalists have helped to develop this kind of education by helping to pay for commercial schools and technical colleges. They have also provided training programmes for their workers to learn more technical skills.

We have seen how the growth of an education system controlled by the capitalists grew slowly with the growth of the capitalist class. What is taught, and how it is taught, is very different to education during feudal times. At all times in history however, the ruling class has only provided the amount of education which is necessary to keep production going.

Both workers and students however, have not just sat back and accepted the education handed out to them by the bosses and the government. One of the only reasons why there is as much formal education as there is today, is because of pressure applied by workers and students for more education.

Resistance to education however has not only been through applying pressure for more education. Many workers have understood that the main problem with education is not only that there is not enough, but also that they are taught the ideas of the ruling class.

With the growth in the organisational power of the working class, education for workers has grown. In South Africa for example, worker education has been closely tied to the democratic organisations of the working class (the progressive unions) and is independent from both the bosses and the government. This allows workers far greater control over what and how they learn. Workers are able to learn and discuss ways of building their organisation, and of understanding the workings of the exploitative and oppressive society in which we live. In this way, workers have begun to build an education system which suits their own class. Together, workers are learning about tomorrow today!

part 2

what is

education?



- the bantustan system;
- unemployment and the right to work;
- the right to strike.

The highlight of the weekend Congress will be the mass rally to be held on Sunday December 1 at Kings Park Rugby Stadium.

Hundreds of pamphlets, posters and stickers have been distributed in Natal advertising the Worker Rally.

But not only workers from Natal will be there, workers from all over the country are making plans to bus to Durban for what could be the largest worker gathering this country has yet seen.

It is clear that because of its size the new federation will have a major impact on working class and general politics. The Congress slogan of 'Workers Unite: One Country, One Federation' already gives some indication of this.

Well, an era has ended but a more exciting one is about to begin. Forward with the Workers' Struggle!

Miners' court victory

THE industrial court's decision on October 31 to order the reinstatement of the Marievale miners who were dismissed while on a legal strike is an important victory for all South African workers.

However, only when the court has handed over its written judgement will it become clear how big a victory it is.

This is the first time that the court has ruled in favour of workers dismissed during a legal strike. And the judgement could offer some protection for striking workers.

Unionists have long complained of the unfairness of the present practice where workers, after having gone through all the lengthy procedures required for a legal strike, are still dismissed.

They have argued that there should be some legal protection for workers on a legal strike otherwise there seems little point in bothering with the legal procedures.

The miners at Gencor's Marievale mine went on strike on September 1 and 2 together with 30 000 National Union of Mineworkers' members at oth-

er mines when management refused to better their wage offer. NUM called off the strike temporarily after widespread police and mine security guard action.

During the strike Marievale management refused union officials access to the mines and refused to allow union shaft stewards use of the mine telephone.

After it was called off, Marievale barred the previously striking workers from returning to work and continued to remove them from the mines. It did this even when the union had obtained an order from the Supreme Court which said they could not evict workers.

Workers interviewed soon after hearing the news of the court order said the court had done its work properly. Kesebonye Seishiro, a migrant worker from Botswana, who has worked at Marievale for about 30 years, said the strike had been correct.

'I took part in the strike and will strike again if it is necessary. The managers don't listen to us when we talk to them so

we have to strike so that they can see that we are serious about getting more money. But even when we went on strike they didn't answer us properly. They tortured us with dogs which was a very bad thing and didn't discuss with us.'

Kesebonye earns R9 a day and works 26 days a month.

Nyakonpe Phophi, 52-year-old worker from Lesotho, felt the same. 'The work I do shovelling away the rock which has been exploded is hard and dangerous. I'm not satisfied with the R300 a month I get. I fought for the strike because I wanted more money. The managers' reaction was wrong. They dismissed us for no reason. Now the court has come up with a good idea and the managers will have to listen.'

The court order took effect on November 1 and workers have 21 days to report for duty.

Workers must be taken back on terms no less favourable than those they worked under before they were dismissed.

However, the one drawback of the court order is that management and the union have to agree on who is to be taken

back. So far, they have agreed on 389 names and are still negotiating on the rest.

NUM said it had taken the case to the industrial court because it believed the workers had been unfairly dismissed.

'Management at no stage tried to negotiate with the union. The union's demands were reasonable while management responded by busing striking workers back to their homes.'

The NUM has now taken legal action in the cases of other miners dismissed during the strike. The union has applied for industrial court hearings for miners from Beatrice, Hartbeesfontein, Deelkraal, Matla and Transvaal Navigation Collieries.

● STOP PRESS: NUM sources report that miners at Marievale are being fed worse food than ever before. 'They are virtually living on bread and water. Add to this the plot to assault union leaders and it is clear for anyone to see that Marievale is going all out to break up the union,' an NUM spokesperson said.

Worker poems

We are the workers of the world,
We are fighting for our rights
from the suppressor,
We want liberty for all in the world,
We want to unite and form
one colossal workers'
organisation.

DIE WOLF

Sy voorkop blink,
maar sy woorde stink.
Hy spog oor 'n land,
van 'n ander stand.

Sy woorde het geen krag,
maar tog het hy mag.
Jaag hom uit ons land,
jaag hom uit ons stand.

Hy is minderheid,
maar tog heers hy oor die meer.
Jaag hom uit ons land,
na 'n ander stand.

Jaag hom in die see,
sonder wee.
Jaag hom teen die Berg,
wat hom staan en vererg.

Die dood straf,
sal vir hom wag.
Begrawe hom in 'n land,
nie van ons stand.

By Donovan, an Eastern Cape student

Our dignity will soon appear to everyone,
All traces of inequality should be removed,
We want social equality and equal justice,
We want equal opportunities for all,
Irrespective of colour, sex or religion.

Right now we'll fight until we conquer,
Cannons and guns cannot stop our struggle,

I, THE UNEMPLOYED

I'm here
Living under a Black Cloud
Here, living in thinning light
here
Freedom is nailed to a tree to die
Here I am living in a matchbox.

I'm here dying of hunger
and my country is also dying
My children are dying too
Look at them
how dull their eyes
how slow their walk and the turning
of their heads
Nothing for them to eat
Can you hear?
They are crying.

Detentions and killings cannot frighten us,
Our strength is stronger than anything,
Because our unity means drastic strength.

Let's build up one tremendous labour movement,
And raise our status as workmen,
With no fear, we'll win our battle,
Those brothers and sisters who sacrificed for us,

I spit at the sun
shining on me
blazing everyday
I am waiting for the rain to come
Cattle are dying
and I cannot plough the beautiful piece of earth
Here I am unemployed.

I
the unemployed
I am here but invisible
Preacher man — pray for rain to come
White collars
in your chrome and brown armchairs
Please brighten up this thinning light
I am appealing to you oppressors

Are a good example of our bravery.

Definitely sure our demand will be recognised,
After all, our struggle cannot be banished,
Our love for our country will forever survive,
Together we'll sing our songs of freedom,
We'll never despair,
Our spirit of fraternity will never die.
By Blessing Mdluli

to free
freedom from the tree.

My face
buried with anger and sorrow
My stomach
filled with hatred and pain
I behave like a lunatic
My kids are dying —
malnutrition, kwashiokor
There is nothing growing here
and the animals have died.

All I hear now
Is the night wind
It whirls around
spelling the agony of murder
I'm dying.

By Nise Malange from TGWU