

FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



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THE FIGHT FOR A LIVING WAGE

THE National Automobile and Allied Workers Union has declared a truce over wages with the three major motor manufacturers in the Eastern Cape – Ford, General Motors and Volkswagen.

This follows this year's lengthy wrangle over interim wage increases where the motor employers had been reluctant to even meet the rising cost of living.

However, the message from NAAWU's motor workers is clear:

'We may have agreed to accept an increase to cover the cost of living this year, but we have not given up our fight for a living wage.'

DEMAND

NAAWU's negotiating team, which included full time officials and senior shop stewards from all three companies, said after the negotiations that the R3,50 an hour demand was still on the table.

Last year's negotiations which were also around this demand for a living wage were marked by a mass strike by well over 10 000 motor workers.

This year, although the wage talks did not lead to a

strike, the negotiations were just as tough.

The tone of the wage talks was set by a letter sent in April to NAAWU by the employer's association saying that in view of the recession, the motor companies were adamant that negotiations be deferred until the last quarter of the year.

This would mean that workers would only get an increase in 1984.

Throughout the talks the employers tried to wriggle out of giving workers any wage increase.

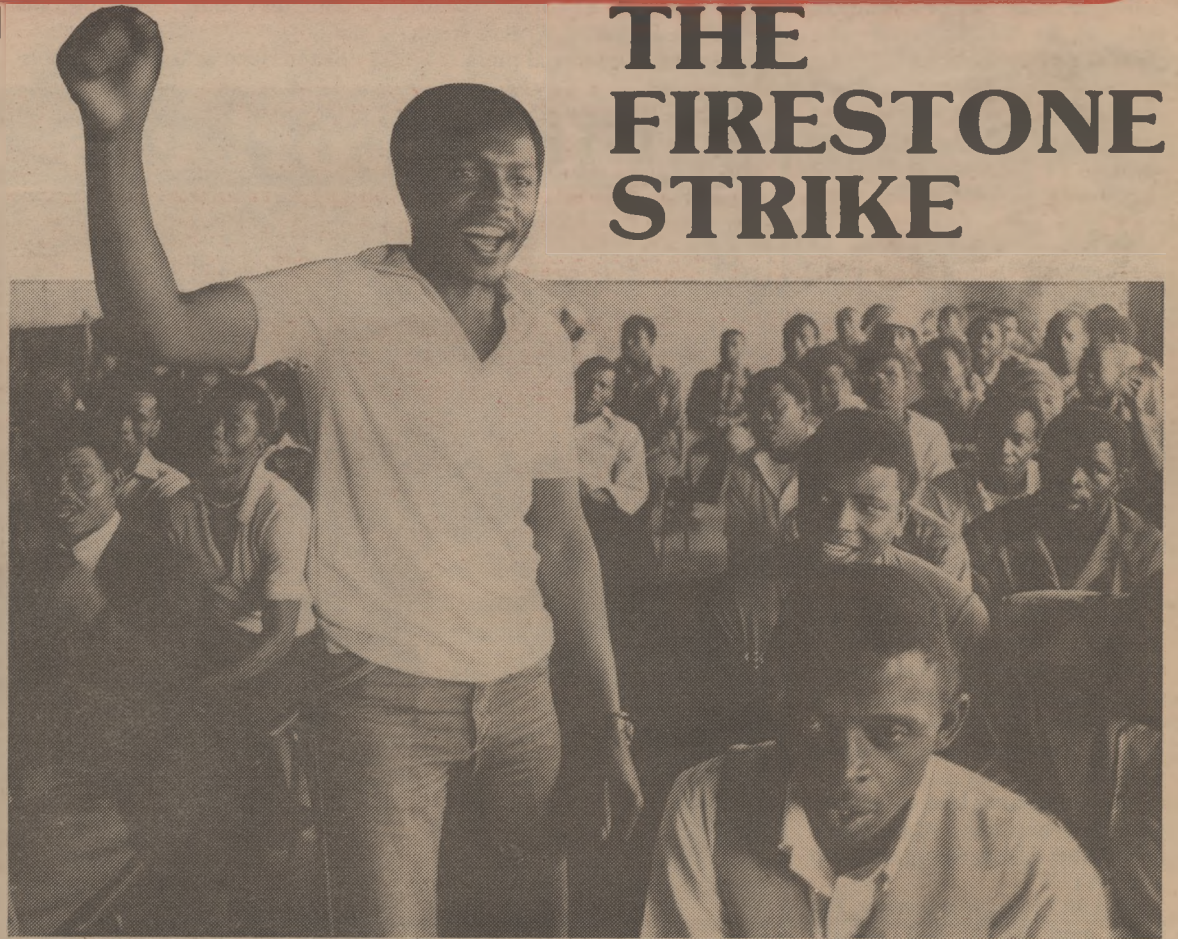
NAAWU responded to the letter by rejecting their excuse and stated that to refuse to negotiate a wage increase for August would be a breach of the agreement.

MANDATE

The employers finally agreed to a meeting on July 4 but arrived saying they had no mandate to make an offer.

The employer's association even brought with them a slide show which set out to 'prove' the bad position the motor companies were in.

The NAAWU negotiating



THE FIRESTONE STRIKE

THE Brits industrial area is once again the scene of industrial unrest as Firestone workers strike in support of their demand for an immediate pay rise.

The Brits area is on the border of Bophuthatswana and because of its classification as an industrial 'deconcentration' point many of the factories have been able to get away with paying poverty wages.

However, union activity in this area is on the upswing with both the Metal and Allied Workers Union and the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union recruiting members.

For the past ten months, dismissed workers from B & S Steel and Engineering have met everyday in a local hall in a show of defiance and solidarity.

The B & S workers are now awaiting the outcome of their

Industrial Court case where they have accused the company of union bashing.

The Firestone workers initially stopped work on August 18 in protest at the company's introduction of a wage increase without negotiating with NAAWU.

The workers returned to work when the company agreed to open talks with the union.

However, a week later they again stopped work in support of a demand for an immediate wage increase.

The workers have rejected outright a company proposal of a wage increase tied to a worker's productivity.

Through the wage talks the workers have already won the right to plant based bargaining and Firestone has agreed to raise the hourly minimum to R2.

In a further breakthrough, the company has also agreed to look at the possibility of changing from an incentive bonus to a measured day work system.

Under the present system, a worker can lose a quarter of his wages if he falls below the target.

Now the union and Firestone will be meeting to see if they can break this deadlock.

On going to press, the workers were still out and united in their rejection of a production tied increase.

However, the dispute shows signs of intensifying as the Security Police had approached workers and warned them to stop causing 'kak' at Firestone.

NAAWU condemned this 'unwarranted interference' by the police in what so far had been a peaceful stoppage.

team said the slides did not show the 'human suffering' that workers were going through.

OFFER

They demanded that the employers respond to the union's demand.

At the second meeting on July 28, the employers said they were prepared to make a 15c adjustment in December only, but if the unions persisted with an August wage increase they could offer 5c.

BEAR

This was slammed by NAAWU members in all the major motor plants.

They said that they were already having to bear the burden of reduced wages because of short time –

the employers should at least meet the cost of living increase.

NAAWU suggested an increase ranging from 16c to 32c based on the Consumer Price Index – which measures the rising cost of essential foodstuffs.

RESPONSE

The employers' response? They put forward an offer of an 8c to 16c for August and a further 10c in February next year.

The negotiating team rejected this offer as it was still below the inflation rate and would lead to an 'erosion' of workers' wages.

Finally on August 16, over a month after the first meeting, the employers agreed to a 10c increase backdated to August 1, a

15c increase in February and another 15c increase in August next year.

INCREASE

This offer was taken back to NAAWU members who agreed to accept it as the increases were 'in line with the current rate of inflation'.

Over the next year the motor industry's minimum wage rate will rise from its present R2,30 an hour to R2,70 an hour – an increase of 18,5 percent.

PREPARE

However workers said that when the agreement expires at the end of next year, the motor employers must be prepared to meet at least their living wage demand of R3,50.

More workers pull out of TUCSA's Typo union

THE printing industry's closed shop has been dealt another blow by the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union.

On August 11, the majority of the workers at Nampak in Pietermaritzburg voted in favour of resigning from the TUCSA affiliated SA Typographical Union (SATU).

They are all members of the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union.

These workers now join their colleagues at three Nampak factories in the Transvaal who also broke free from SATU.

The printing industry's closed shop forces workers to belong to SATU and judging from the decision of the Nampak workers this has been done against their will.

Workers can only belong to another trade union if the company they work for, gets an exemption from the closed shop agreement.

To get this the company has to apply to the printing industry's Industrial Council where SATU sits.

It is believed that SATU is furious about the number of members who have left the union to join the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union.

And it seems likely that the TUCSA union will attempt to block any future applications for exemption from the closed shop even when workers clearly show that they do not want to belong to SATU.

This could only lead to a bitter struggle between the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union and SATU.

PWAWU branch secretary, Pat Horn said SATU had already stalled on Nampak's application

for exemption for workers at the Pietermaritzburg factory.

She said they had used the excuse that they were 'upset' about the publicity given to the granting of other exemptions in FOSATU Worker News and in the commercial press.

'For this reason, they were invited to attend the ballot held by the company to test worker opinion on their membership of SATU.

'But they didn't show up,' she said.

Sister Horn said SATU's refus-

al to attend showed once again their unwillingness to face up to the fact that PWAWU members at Nampak did not want to belong to SATU.

'They cannot now come with their original story that workers at Nampak were being forced to join Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union', she said.

PWAWU has now written a letter to Nampak management demanding that they stop deducting SATU subscriptions from their members' wages within two weeks and start deducting PWAWU subscriptions instead.

BOYCOTT WINS WAGE INCREASE

AFTER an overtime boycott at G & W Base and Industrial Minerals in Wadeville, the company has agreed to an immediate 19,5 cents increase.

However, although the workers have for the time being accepted this increase, they have pledged themselves to continue the fight for a living wage.

STRIKE

In April the workers at the plant went on strike after the company had refused to better its wage offer.

At the time, management claimed they could not make a better offer as profits were bad.

This was not believed by the workers as the company had recently built a new plant in Brakpan so they downed tools.

OPEN

They demanded that the company open their books so that the profits could be checked by somebody they trusted.

The workers went back to work when the company agreed to open their books to the Chemical Workers Industrial Union's auditors.

The examination of the books by union auditors revealed that the company had large reserves of money.

RAISE

The workers again demanded that this money be used to raise their pay to a living level.

G & W Base still refused to increase its offer, so workers decided at a general meeting to ban overtime.

In settling the wage dispute, the company agreed to increase its offer to 19,5 cents an hour and to re-open negotiations early next year.

Motor workers' meeting



General Motors' workers meet to discuss the final round of the Eastern Cape wage talks. Far left - General Motors' workers congratulate NAAWU's negotiating team.



Sham union tricks workers

THE Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union has attacked the National Union of Sugar Manufacturing and Refining Employees for tricking workers at SAPPI's Stanger mill.

Recently when PWAWU organisers went to the Stanger paper mill, Indian workers came up to them and said they had joined the union.

The organisers thought this was strange as although they had spent weeks talking to workers about the union, they had not yet started collecting joining forms.

The workers explained that they had been called by their foreman to the personnel department, where they had 'signed stop order forms in the presence of personnel staff and 'union officials'.

The bogus union officials had merely said they were from 'the union' and did not even bother to explain which union, the PWAWU organisers said.

The workers were 'horrified' to find out that the 'green card' they had been given did not belong to the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union.

PWAWU has a yellow membership card.

At SAPPI, where there are 500 Indian workers and 250 African

workers, Selby Nsibandé's sugar union has already begun canvassing the African workers.

It appears that this had been done on the basis of Nsibandé's reputation as a trade unionist who is able to get workers' pension money back for them.

To date, PWAWU has succeeded in winning important improvements to the SAPPI pension fund but many African workers would prefer to withdraw from the pension fund altogether.

It is clear that to fulfil the many promises Nsibandé's union has made to the African workers it needs to organise a majority of the workers.

So his organisers had been trading on the weeks of work put in by the PWAWU to draw in Indian workers, PWAWU said.

In this it appears they also had the cooperation of management, PWAWU added.

'This is not surprising in the light of the sugar union's origins. (It is well known that Nsibandé's union was established in 1980 with the aid of a large loan from the sugar bosses)'

PWAWU slammed the sugar union saying 'this is a thoroughly deceitful practice'.

'When workers sign any PWAWU form it will certainly not be done by management,' the union said.

Fabric firm backs down

PINETOWN's Universal Lace and Fabric Mills has been forced to back down on its earlier refusal to pay workers their cost of living allowance.

The 170 workers at the mill went on strike last month in support of a demand for more pay.

The workers described their R28 a week wages as 'starvation pay' which was not even sufficient to cover transport costs let alone feed their families.

They demanded a R20 increase to their weekly wages.

Only when the company agreed in writing that it would begin negotiations with the National Union of Textile Workers, did the workers return to work.

However before talks began, the company went ahead and gave workers a R10 a week increase and at the same time took away the cost of living allowance.

At a meeting with the union, management said they had spoken to the workers 'individually' and they had agreed to the R10 increase and the dropping off of the cost of living allowance.

The union asked for access to the mill to check with workers whether this was the case but the company refused.

At a meeting outside the gates, workers said they had never accepted management's proposal.

When NUTW tried to raise the issue with the company, Univer-

sal Lace again stalled on negotiations.

The union then decided to start proceedings for an unfair labour practice case in order to prevent the company from cutting off the workers' allowance and to get it to bargain in 'good faith'.

However, before the matter could go before the Industrial Court, Universal Lace agreed to talk to the union about recognition.

In the meantime, it has agreed to continue paying the cost of living allowance to the workers.

If the company is unable to settle the matter with NUTW the case will still proceed to the Industrial Court.

HEALTH and safety at the workplace is rapidly becoming a prime issue for workers.

For too long South African employers have cut corners by not caring for either the health or the safety of their workers.

And on top of this, the law provides little protection for workers even though a brand new Machinery and Occupational Safety Act has just been passed.

Recently, a visiting American expert on occupational health, Barry Castleman, said the local health and safety standards were 'primitive'.

He said the new act lagged decades behind protection offered workers elsewhere in the world.

But what he said is not new to FOSATU. He merely confirmed what FOSATU has been saying all along.

However, FOSATU believes that a union offers real collective protection for workers.

So affiliated unions have embarked on their own health and safety campaigns by tackling the problems within their particular industry.

Setting the pace, the National Union of Textile Workers two years ago launched a highly successful campaign against Brown Lung — a lung disease caused by cotton dust.

Last month's FOSATU Worker News reported that a Hammarsdale worker, John Hlela, had been granted a compensation of R109 a month for the rest of his life after it was proved he had been disabled by Brown Lung.

Now the NUTW is stepping up its health and safety campaign and at the beginning of the

S.A. health and safety standards 'decades behind'

month employed a full time health and safety officer — Dr Neil White.

Dr White has been a key figure

in the union's Brown Lung campaign which has required active involvement from union shop stewards and members.

NUTW's general secretary, John Copelyn said as well as continuing the Brown Lung Campaign, Dr White would be



Dr Neil White asks workers questions about their health during one of the factory campaigns

educating union shop stewards on health issues.

'This is so that they can learn to recognise conditions in the factory which are unhealthy or dangerous for workers,' he said.

A slide show on the Brown Lung campaign has also been put together which will be shown to everyone in the union as part of the health education campaign.

Brother Copelyn said NUTW's National Executive Committee had recently re-examined the union's health and safety efforts.

'We looked at the practice of British unions who on the whole merely file compensation claims.

'And we looked at American unions who focus around pressuring the State to adopt better health and safety standards', he said.

He added that in America, the Brown Lung campaigns were organised by Brown Lung Associations which were completely separate from the union.

The National Executive resolved to rather try to negotiate better conditions in the factory coupled with hazard pay for workers.

Brother Copelyn said in this way workers would be compensated for working in dusty conditions.

NUTW hoped this would encourage a greater awareness by textile companies of dust levels and would lead to regular testing of the levels by both the union and the companies.

He said Dr White's appointment would allow the union to expand its campaign beyond Brown Lung to other health areas like the danger of chemicals and the problem of noise.

Shatterprufe cuts costs at expense of workers

CUTTING costs at the expense of workers is a common practice of management during a period of recession.

Following the signing of a recognition agreement at Shatterprufe Safety Glass in Pretoria, workers were quick to take up this issue.

The factory is working a short time of three hours a week so when management asked one department to work overtime they refused.

Workers asked why they should work overtime when the rest of the factory was on short time.

They also asked why management had increased production targets in the plant while they were working short time.

CHEATED

Workers felt cheated because: — they were now expected to produce more goods per hour than previously and so had to work harder.

— they were receiving less wages because of the short time.

— management was therefore receiving the same production at less cost while workers were working harder for less money.

Workers became furious and stopped work for six hours demanding the stopping of short time or a reduction in production targets and no overtime work.

After negotiations with the Chemical Workers Industrial

Union, the company agreed to reduce production targets.

In turn, the workers agreed to work overtime in the event of a breakdown. They then returned to work.

Meanwhile at another Shatterprufe factory in Port Elizabeth, the company has signed a recognition agreement with the CWIU.

RESIGNED

Last FOSATU Workers News we reported that workers had resigned from the 'useless' Glass Workers Union and had joined CWIU.

Newly elected shop steward, Ernest Scholtz said there was now a completely different atmosphere in the factory.

'Workers for the first time now have a say in their own working conditions,' he said.

After the signing of the agreement, he said, about another hundred guys signed joining forms for the union there and then.

'The first thing we will be doing away with is the provident fund and we will introduce a new pension scheme,' Brother Scholtz said.

'The only time a worker ever got paid out of the provident fund was when he joined the staff,' he added.

Meat bosses still anti-union

THE price of meat may have gone up and down recently but the hard line attitude of meat companies towards trade unions seems to have remained constant.

In 1980 more than 800 meat workers went on strike in the Western Cape in a bid to win recognition of their union — the General Workers Union.

But even though the strike spread to a countrywide boycott of meat, the workers were unsuccessful.

Now again, at the State-owned

Cato Ridge Abattoir worker members of the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union are pushing for recognition.

Management have refused to even talk to SFAWU until the union extends its scope of registration to cover Cato Ridge and prove paid up membership.

Branch organiser Jay Naidoo said the union had applied for an extension of scope but did not feel this should be an important factor.

'The company should recog-

nise a union solely on the support it has in the factory,' he said.

If the abattoir wanted to test the support, the SFAWU has said it was prepared to have a ballot, Brother Naidoo added.

In the meantime, the union is preparing to take legal action against the abattoir and has already informed the company that it would declare a dispute unless it set a date for the negotiation of a recognition agreement.

Clash looms between Frame and NUTW

THE battle between the National Union of Textile Workers and Frame is heating up.

After ten years of fighting for recognition, workers know that they can expect Frame to try every trick in the book.

Earlier this year FOSATU Worker News reported on NUTW's success in getting a court order blocking Frame from recognising sweetheart union — the Textile Workers

Industrial Union.

However, Frame is never slow to head for the gap and when the court order expired and no conciliation board had been appointed, the company once again started deducting stop orders for TWIU.

This greatly angered workers who were told by TWIU men that this proved that 'NUTW can never defeat Frame'.

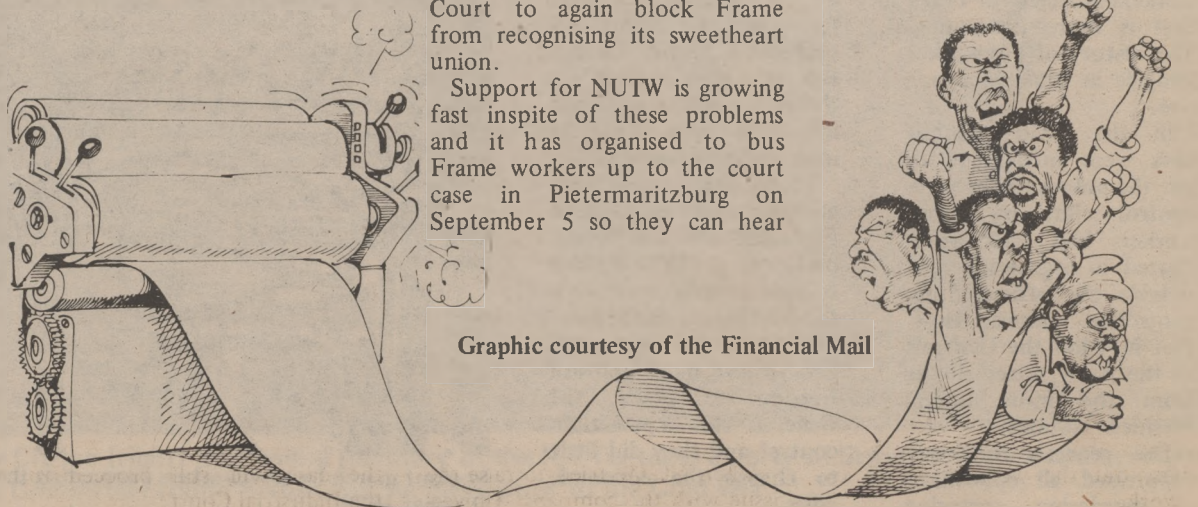
But NUTW moved fast and is going back to the Industrial Court to again block Frame from recognising its sweetheart union.

Support for NUTW is growing fast inspite of these problems and it has organised to bus Frame workers up to the court case in Pietermaritzburg on September 5 so they can hear

for themselves what is happening.

It now seems that TWIU has lost all credibility as many more Frame workers cross the floor to NUTW.

Regional FOSATU secretary, Prof Sineke said 'We will give our brothers and sisters in Frame all the support they need. Ten years ago they started our unions and now we'll help them win their long battle.'



COMMENT

THIS edition of FOSATU Worker News looks at the major international trade union organisations and at the worker struggle in Brazil.

Now, why look outside of South Africa when such important events are taking place right here?

The answer to this is that as workers we need to understand and learn from international experience. Our worker struggle cannot avoid being part of an international struggle, because the multinational companies we organise in South Africa also dominate world production and trade.

For this reason, it is clear that the worker movement will have to be strong enough to do battle against powerful international capital.

In South Africa we may have many allies in our fight against the evil of apartheid. But as workers we are not only oppressed racially, we are also exploited by these giant multinationals. To change this we can only rely on the strength and determination of our own worker organisation linked to the solidarity of worker organisation internationally.

This is why FOSATU has always sought out international contact. We have benefited greatly from these links with workers employed by the same multinationals in other parts of the world.

In their hunger for profit, multinationals seek out countries where they can pay low wages in order to keep profits high. They are even prepared to shift factories right across the world to wherever they find these conditions.

Brazil and South Africa are just two of the many countries where the profit seekers of Europe saw a chance to acquire great wealth. But to do this they needed millions of workers — but now these workers are organising. This organisation will stop the multinationals from using worker against worker in their endless drive for more profits.

In Brazil, Chile, South Africa and many more countries, the story has been much the same. Industries grew at the same time as there was massive repression. Workers suffered the most under that repression. But no longer! Workers are not prepared to be led like lambs into the political slaughterhouse. During the 1960's and 1970's they have organised themselves but now they must form links with one another.

Unfortunately in the area of international worker contact there is too much power politics and not enough worker solidarity.

FOSATU has tried to avoid these problems by following certain policies but now as new and greater pressures have arisen we are now discussing and reviewing our international policies.

Our aim in the years ahead is to benefit from international worker solidarity and to avoid the pitfalls of international power politics. Just as in South Africa we will continue the struggle for liberation from apartheid in a way that does not weaken the worker struggle.

THE history of the present international trade union organisations is long, complicated and very often controversial. It is often the case that the story of what happened will change depending on who is telling it.

However, without any knowledge of this history — a history which still affects what is happening today — workers here in South Africa will not truly be able to decide on international matters.

International trade union co-operation has been organised through two main kinds of organisations:

- * International Confederations of the trade union organisations (what are called national centres) in different countries

- * International Trade Secretariats — which join together unions from different countries that are all in the same type of industry.

'European unions form the International Trade Union Secretariat'

In 1902 the International Trade Union Secretariat (ITUS) was formed. It consisted of most of the European national trade union federations. To begin with it co-operated very closely with the Second or Socialist International, an organisation to which the socialist and social democratic parties of Europe had affiliated. In its early years it concentrated solely on factory floor issues and left political questions to be discussed by the Second International.

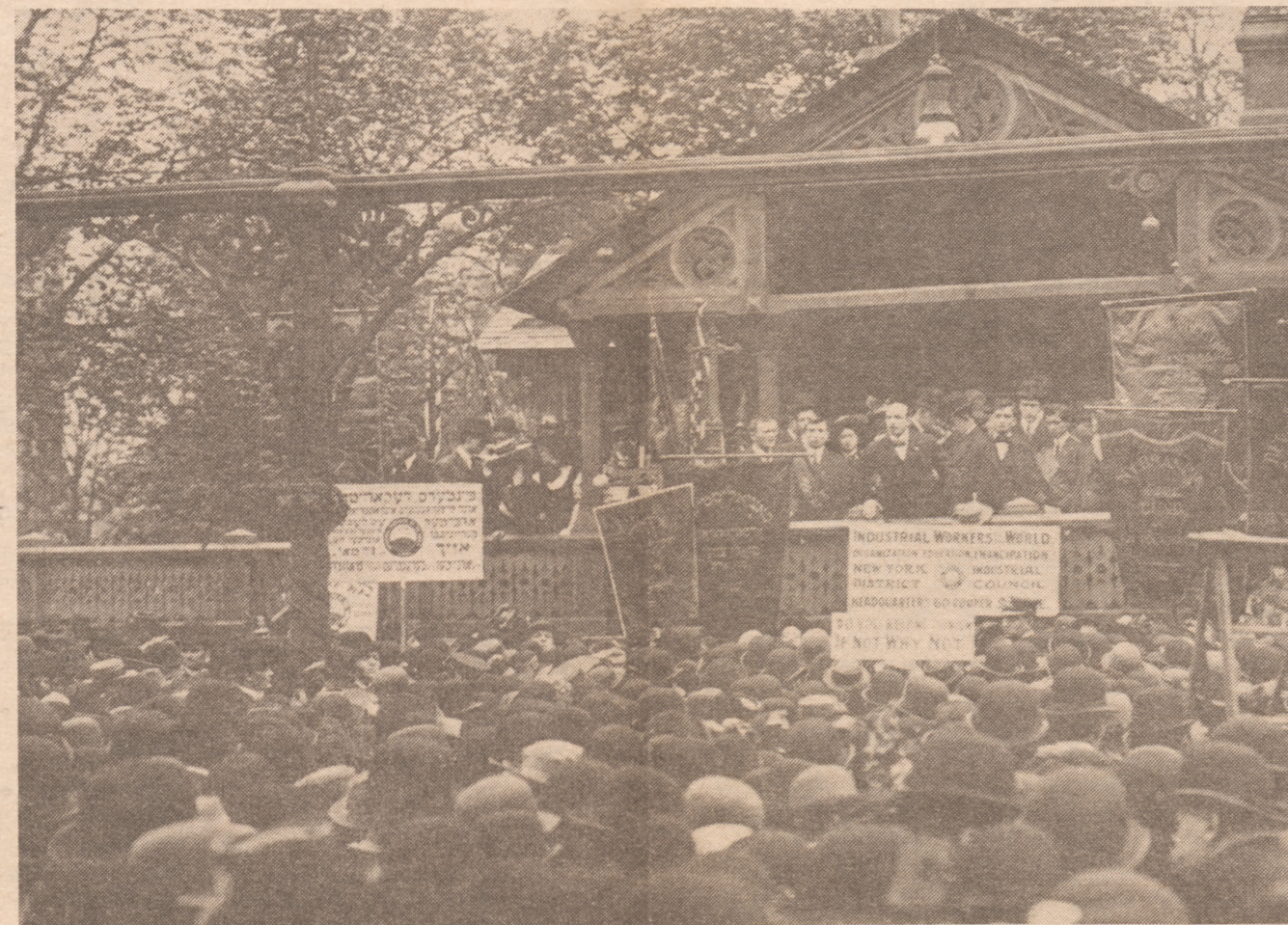
Later, as the different trade unions in various European countries began to operate more independently of political parties, the International Trade Union Secretariat began to concern itself with wider issues as well.

The ITUS was made up only of European trade unions. The American Federation of Labour (AFL), a federation of craft unions, in the United States was hostile to socialism and to the European socialist political parties, and so refused to participate.

'The socialist Industrial Workers of the World alarms British and German Trade Union Federations'

Later on a rival, socialist trade union body — the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) — grew in power and influence in the United States and tried to participate in the ITUS. This alarmed the British and German trade union federations who thought the IWW was too radical. In 1911 they persuaded the AFL to join so as to prevent the affiliation of the IWW. The name of the international was then changed to the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU). However after the First World War socialist trade unions in the United States were severely repressed, and al-

THE BEGINNINGS OF TODAY'S INTERNATIONAL FEDERATIONS



A mass meeting held in New York in the 1900s by the Industrial Workers of the World

most crushed. Now the AFL had less to fear from socialist trade unions and did not need to worry about their joining the IFTU.

Since the AFL was also hostile to the socialist influence in the IFTU it therefore withdrew and it only rejoined in 1937.

Three important developments that were to affect international trade union organisation took place in the Second World War. Firstly some of the most effective resistance to the German armies in the occupied European countries came from communist parties and communist organised trade unions. Secondly Britain and the USA joined forces with Russia, despite their fundamental political differences, to fight Germany. Thirdly the British and American Labour movements became closely involved with their governments in fighting the war and in advancing the foreign policy of their countries.

However when the War ended these developments were to have complicated effects.

- * Firstly communist parties were able to use their influence and support from trade unions together with money and resources from the Soviet Union to come to power. This happened first in Czechoslovakia in 1948, and soon after in other East European countries (e.g. Hungary, Roumania). Communist trade unions were also powerful in France (C.G.T. — the most important national federation) and Italy, (C.G.I.L. — also the most important national federation) and were seen as a threat by Britain and the USA as well as by non-communist groups in Europe.

- * Secondly despite their basic political differences the British and American allies had joined forces with Soviet Russia to fight against Germany, Italy and Japan. So in many areas close contact and respect was built as a result of the bitter struggles that were fought. This was also true between the worker organisations in the different countries. It was these links that first influenced worker organisation at the end of the War.

- * Thirdly, during the war the national centres had worked closely with their governments, the military and the secret services to help in fighting the war. Since worker organisations were very active in resisting German occupation in Europe it is easy to see why the trade unions became so actively involved.

'Bitter hostility between America and Russia develops into the Cold War'

However, after the War a bitter hostility grew between the governments of the USA and Soviet Russia. This came to be called the 'Cold War' and quickly also involved the other Western Allies.

So as the 'Cold War' opened between the Western Allies and Soviet Russia the trade unions became part of it because they were still so closely linked with the government and secret services. So for example the British TUC and the American AFL played important roles in campaigns against communist unions in Greece, France, Italy and Germany. The aim was to prevent them taking control and bringing in pro-communist governments. Russia also poured money and resources into the communist unions. Both West and East expected the federations they supported to follow their political line in the 'Cold War'. The trade unions became a major political battlefield in post-war Europe.

The links between East and West during the war gave rise to a move for a new international trade union federation. This gave rise to the formation of the WFTU (World Federation of Trade Unions) shortly after the end of the war. National Centres from both East and West affiliated. However from the USA the AFL did not affiliate. A rival group, the Congress of Industrial Organisations (CIO) which tended to have more militant industrial unions, did affiliate as many tended to a socialist political position.

However, as the 'Cold War' developed the chances of the WFTU surviving with affiliates from East and West grew slim. In 1948 the TUC decided to press for the dissolution or reorganisation of the WFTU. The pro-communist national centres opposed this and a split immediately followed.

In December of the same year 261 delegates from 59 countries met in London to form the ICFTU to which the American AFL and CIO both affiliated.

However certain disagreements continued in the ICFTU. The ICFTU was a child of the Cold War and disputes developed over how that war should be fought. The AFL, which provided one quarter of the ICFTU's budget, and which felt it should have a correspondingly large influence over the policy demanded a militantly hard line anti-communist and anti-colonial position. It was reluctant to support even neutral trade union federations.

'Tensions in the ICFTU lead to the withdrawal of American Unions'

Other ICFTU delegations felt that the AFL would support any anti-communist union whether or not it had any real worker support. Tensions grew as the AFL (later with the CIO in the AFL/CIO) began to operate independently of the ICFTU in Asia, Africa and South America, as some of the European powers and trade union federations became interested in co-operation (detente) with Eastern Europe. These tensions continued and led to a decline in the influence of the ICFTU. Eventually in 1969 the AFL-CIO withdrew from the ICFTU and only returned in 1982. The ICFTU survived and in fact probably grew in influence in some areas without the AFL-CIO presence. However, it was clear that to have the major Western national centre out of the ICFTU could not continue forever. Whether the ICFTU will now grow and overcome differences will have to be tested in the years to come.

At the beginning of the century Christian (mainly Catholic) trade unions began to emerge. In 1920 they formed the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (best known by its French initials of CISC). This organisation continued till 1968 when it changed its name to the World Confederation of Labour (WCL). This happened because many of its affiliates no longer restricted themselves to being Christian unions only.

'International Trade Secretariats formed in 1889'

International Trade Secretariats (ITS's) also started at about the same time as the first Confederation. The first ITS was founded in 1889. Many more were established in the next 20 years. Each trade secretariat was confined to one industry. Their job was to share information and organise assistance to trade unions in different countries which were organising in the same industry (e.g. Metal). Unlike the International Confederation they accepted more than one affiliate from any one country (so two rival unions could affiliate to the Secretariat). The AFL unions also played an important role in the ITS's. ITS's did not involve themselves in political matters. However they refused affiliation to any communist union or to any union from a country governed by a communist party.

A LOOK AT THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN BRAZIL

BRAZIL is a very big country. It has a population of 120 million people which is about four times the size of South Africa's population. It covers a land area that is about seven times larger than that of South Africa. But it is the recent workers' struggle in Brazil that is more interesting. The history of the worker struggle in Brazil is a long one.

In the 1930's labour laws were introduced to put the unions under State control. But by 1960 workers had once again started to organise unions outside the official State controlled unions. However in 1964 the Generals of the Army seized power from the more liberal President Goulart.

The generals ruthlessly suppressed all opposition — murdering, torturing

and detaining. All political opposition, including urban guerrilla uprising and the unofficial trade unions were crushed.

Behind this repression Brazil experienced an 'economic miracle' with economic growth rates between 1968 and 1974 of 10 percent per year (compared to about 5.5 percent in South Africa). But it was a miracle for the rich not the poor but by 1978 even the rich-man's miracle had ended.

To try and deal with the growing problems, General Figueredo who was elected president in 1979 started to talk of reforms or what the Brazilians call *abertura*.

The reforms were intended to give more political freedom. However, the Generals still kept a tight control and they did little to change the economic crisis.

The Brazilian working class and industry had grown amazingly. The majority of the factories are concentrated in the city of Sao Paulo which



In-plant march by steelworkers supporting the wage demands of the Sao Paulo metalworkers October 1978.

has a population of about 13 million — three times bigger than Johannesburg. The factories are very big and the one Volkswagen factory in Sao Paulo employs 34 000 workers.

STRIKES

It was the workers in metal and textile in Sao Paulo who started to reorganise the unofficial unions. Every year since 1977 workers have struck in support of recognition and better wages. In 1979 more than 100 000 metal and motor workers went on strike over demands for a living wage, job security and democratically elected shop stewards. They were joined by 250 000 government workers.

Out of this, the Workers Party was started in order to represent workers in the planned elections. This

was met with great opposition from the State, other political parties and the official trade union leaders.

Since 1980 Brazil has suffered a very serious economic depression. Employers are fighting back against workers. In the motor industry they are introducing robots to replace workers.

When the election took place in November 1982 the Workers' Party did quite well but it is far from being a nationally based party.

LAND

In Brazil there is also a very serious land problem and massive unemployment. The economy has serious problems and just as in South Africa, the government is trying to solve them by methods which 'make things worse

for rural people and workers.

Again in the last few months strikes have occurred and there have been massive riots by the unemployed. The worker struggle has continued and attempts are being made to unify the official and unofficial unions.

Clearly we should know about this struggle and learn from it. In 1981 when one of the Brazilian union leaders was asked how he saw the struggles in Poland and South Africa, he replied:

'It is confirmation that we are not alone in our struggle to build up trade union independence and this is the best way for workers in different parts of the world to establish an independent presence. It is also the basis for the building of a society based on justice and equality.'



Walter Citrine (right) the general secretary of the ICFTU takes a party of Soviet delegates of the Anglo-Soviet Committee round British war factories prior to the Cold War



Striking municipal workers sitting on the grass outside the Queensburgh Civic Centre (Photo courtesy of the Daily News)

Municipal workers march

ABOUT 200 workers marched through the town centre of Queensburgh at the end of last month and then staged a sitdown in the front of the Civic Centre.

The municipal workers of this suburb near Durban were peacefully protesting the Town Council's refusal to pay wage in-

creases this year.

They demanded that their wages be increased by 15 per cent.

The workers began gathering at various points throughout the suburb at about 7am and then to the surprise of early morning shoppers, marched quietly through the centre of the town.

Following this, the workers sat on the grass in front of Queens-

burgh's Civic Centre and waited for the arrival of officials from the Transport and General Workers Union.

After talks with the TGWU, the Town Clerk agreed to call a meeting of Town Council representatives as 'urgently as possible' to discuss an interim recognition of the workers' union and to negotiate a possible wage

agreement.

He also agreed not to take any action against any person as a result of the 'illegal' strike.

The workers' peaceful protest has set them on the way for recognition of the TGWU which they had recently joined.

They have also shown the Council that they feel they should have a say in their wages and working conditions.

Drought hits workers' wages

MORE and more workers are turning to unions for help because of the worsening drought, according to the Southern Natal branch secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers Union, Geoff Schreiner.

Over the past two months the membership at MAWU's Natal branch has doubled.

There are now more than 5 470 organised workers at about 38 factories.

Brother Schreiner said workers were now having to send more and more money home to the rural areas because the drought had killed off the crops.

POOR

The poor wages that the workers had been getting were now not only having to support the worker himself but also his family in the rural areas, he said.

He added that the picture for the future did not look much better as no new crops were being planted at present.

Wage increases for workers have now become a matter of life or death.

'So they have been turning to MAWU as they have heard that the union has rejected the low increase given at the metal industry's Industrial Council and is now pushing for higher wage increases at plant level,' Brother Schreiner said.

He also said workers for the first time saw MAWU as a non-racial union which fought for rights for all workers.

'No longer are the Indian and African workers divided within factories — within MAWU they fight together for better working conditions,' he said.

But this tremendous growth has not been without its problems.

At Ocean Manufacturing, management dismissed all the workers when they went on strike over wages.

However, the union managed to negotiate a settlement in which the company agreed to take back all except thirty workers who are to be paid compensation.

It also agreed to sign a preliminary agreement with MAWU.

And at Mckinnon Chain, the union has declared a dispute and is taking the company to the Industrial Court.

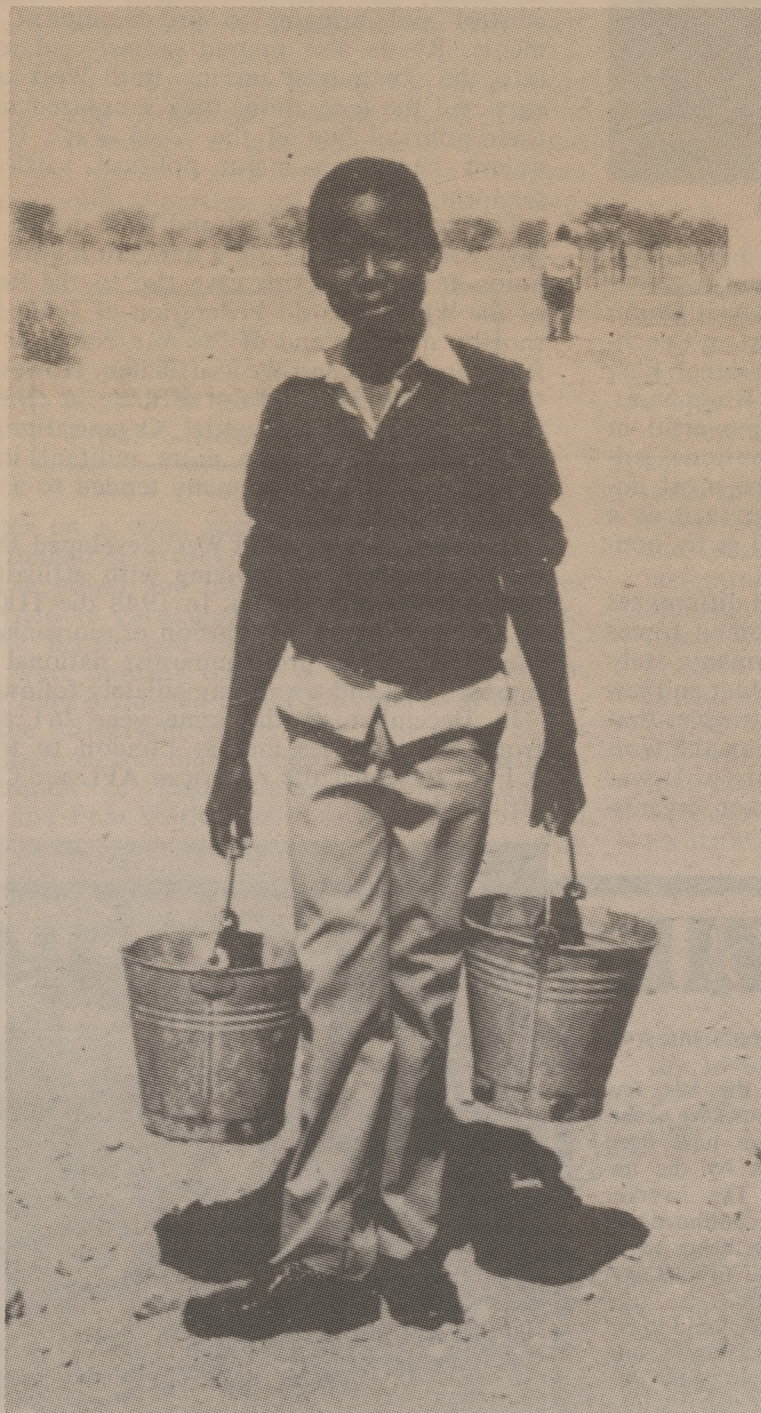
EAGER

Brother Mbanjwa, the local MAWU organiser said the company had on many occasions told the union it would recognise it, but has never stuck to this.

'Now we have had enough of these empty promises and we are eager to get the company in court because it has now been established that employers have to negotiate in good faith with representative unions,' he said.

Disputes have also been declared with:

* CYC Engineering for failing to produce safety boots and clothing for their workers who are



The scramble for water (Photo courtesy of SPP)

involved in dangerous work.

* WB Camerons for refusing to disclose any information to the union to assist in wage negotiations. This could be an important case for unions as it tests the union's right to demand that the company reveal reasonable information.

* Gedore Tools in Pinetown for retrenching 13 workers without consulting the union.

Very recently MAWU also declared a dispute with Scottish

Cables, one of the biggest companies in Pietermaritzburg, for refusing to negotiate wages at factory-level.

When negotiations for the Cables Sector at the Industrial Council broke down, the Board of Directors of Scottish Cables agreed to talk wages with the union at plant level.

But it has now backed off from this agreement — seemingly under pressure from other cable manufacturers.

Wage talks grind to a halt

THE Transport and General Workers Union has accused major bus company, Putco, of hiding its real financial position.

TGWU is at present in a wage deadlock with Putco and attempts to settle it by mediation have failed.

The dispute has now been referred to arbitration.

Both mediation and arbitration have to be followed by the union as bus companies are defined in labour legislation as 'essential services'.

So unlike workers in other industries where a wage deadlock could lead to a legal strike, bus drivers face heavy fines or even imprisonment for striking.

JOKING

When wage talks opened earlier this year, Putco initially refused to consider any wage increase and in fact said their managing director favoured wage cuts.

Workers response to this was 'You must be joking'.

Eventually the company worked its way up from its first offer of R3 to R4 per week and a further R3 increase in the first six months of next year.

This has been rejected by workers who agreed to halve their original demand of an increase of R65 to R30 per week.

At this stage wage talks deadlocked.

TGWU rejected the company's excuse that it had made a loss last year and therefore could not afford to pay a higher increase.

SOUND

The union said that in fact Putco was in a 'sound' financial position and that it was 'definitely not near disaster as management has tried to convince us'.

TGWU argues that judging from the tax the company had paid for the second half of last year, it must have made about R6,5 million.

The union also argues that Putco has recently invested about R47 million in new buses and other equipment.

It remains to be seen whether arbitration will settle this wage deadlock to the benefit of the workers.

Gas workers win R2 min.

WORKERS at Union Liquid Air in Germiston recently became the first workers in the gas industry to win a R2 an hour minimum.

This follows negotiation between the Chemical Workers Industrial Union and the company where a minimum wage of R2,01 was agreed upon.

This is now the highest wage in the industry.

The CWIU is organised in two out of the four major companies producing and distributing industrial gas.

It now hopes to organise the remaining two gas companies and achieve a living wage for all workers in the industry.

NO SMILES AT COKE

THERE aren't any smiling faces down at the Coke factory in Vereeniging inspite of the Coca-Cola advert 'Have a Coke and a smile'.

The workers there are locked in a deadlock with their management over wages.

And already it has led to two strikes at this cooldrink factory.

Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union general secretary, Maggie Magubane said the union had recently entered the first wage negotiations to be held at this factory.

In a bid to raise the 'appalling' wages paid to workers the union had demanded that the weekly minimum be raised to R96, she said.

'The R68 a week wages paid at this factory are lower than any other factory we are organising in the Transvaal,' she added.

However, management have refused to go beyond R77 a week.

As a result of this 'intransigence' workers have stopped work twice for two days in protest at management's attitude, Sister Magubane said.

She said the company had even invited a group of Industrial Relations people from Cape Town to interview workers individually to find out their grievances.

But workers soon saw this as an attempt to divide them and have refused to talk to these people, she added.

The union has now taken steps to declare a dispute with the company and has called for the forming of a Conciliation Board.

Sister Magubane said if this failed to solve the deadlock, it could lead to workers going out on a legal strike.

She said the union had also demanded details of the new pension scheme from the company.

'We have asked for a list of the trustees of the fund and the minutes of previous meetings, but so far management have not responded to this request,' she said.

'According to recent reports from workers, it appears that since the union requested this information management has been trying to get workers to resign from the fund,' Sister Magubane said.

TGWU joins International Federation

THE Transport and General Workers Union recently affiliated to the four million strong International Transport Workers' Federation.

The ITF was founded in 1896 in London and at present has 387 unions from all over the world affiliated to it.

The International Federation is no stranger to South Africa.

During last year's strike by docker members of the General Workers Union in Port Elizabeth the ITF vehemently attacked the South African Transport Services for not recognising a representative union.

It will undoubtedly lend the same support to the TGWU in its struggles against hard line South African management.

Sarmcol workers' day of celebration

IT was a day for celebration when more than 200 people gathered at the Mpophomeni Community hall to see the presentation of R300 to each of the 13 retrenched Sarmcol workers.

Of course, the celebration was not held because 13 workers were retrenched. But rather because their retrenchment marked the road to victory in a long, long struggle for union recognition at this Howick factory.

For ten years the Metal and Allied Workers Union has been struggling against tremendous odds to win recognition at Sarmcol.

In the middle of a renewed campaign last year these 13 workers were retrenched.

With the aid of strong statements from the retrenched workers, MAWU proceeded to take the company to the Industrial Court for 'unfair labour practices'.

But Sarmcol decided to settle out of court and has granted the union stop order facilities and has agreed to negotiate a full recognition agreement with MAWU.

At the presentation, the moment of truth came when the union handed over the cheques to the 13 workers.

Some people could not believe their eyes. Most Sarmcol workers were not 100 percent sure whether MAWU would ever



Some of the people who came to the Sarmcol meeting at which the Mayor of Mpophomeni also wished the 13 retrenched workers well and congratulated the Sarmcol workers on their victory.

get into the factory, let alone make such a generous offer to retrenched workers.

MAWU local organiser, John Makhatini told the workers that it was by no 'miracle' that the union had got inside the factory.

'It was because of the power of the workers,' he said.

He added that workers had made it clear that they wanted the union instead of a liaison committee which was nothing more than the company's 'mouthpiece'.

But, he said, this was just the beginning of the struggle, workers should not just sit back and

relax.

Later, the branch secretary of MAWU, Geoff Schreiner explained to workers that Sarmcol was the key factory in Howick.

'If you can control Sarmcol,' he said, 'then you will be able to stand as a strong force in the area.'

Workers thrown into 'poverty dustbin'



WADEVILLE factory, Litemaster, has callously thrown over 80 of its workers into the 'poverty dustbin'.

This was said by the Metal and Allied Workers Union as it stepped up its campaign to have these workers re-instated.

The 86 workers were not taken back by the company after a strike at the beginning of July.

The workers, who have been meeting everyday in FOSATU's Katlehong office, have appealed to 'brothers in Katlehong and Thokoza not to take our jobs, they must unite with us'.

And the union is investigating legal avenues in a bid to get the workers back at work.

The problem started back in May when the company retrenched 40 workers without listen-

ing to workers' proposal that jobs be shared.

The retrenched workers all signed grievance forms stating that 'I can't accept that I am retrenched. I'm unfairly dismissed and want to be re-instated.'

However management refused to discuss their grievances and have insisted that retrenchment was a management prerogative.

This led to a strike on July 12 by the entire workforce.

The following day the company selectively rehired 135 workers, but not the 86, and this included all the shop stewards except one.

MAWU has slammed Litemaster for coming to South Africa 'just for profits'.

'When times are bad the shareholders are not prepared to help their workers,' the union said.

R10 000 paid to 15 steel workers

TEN thousand Rand has been paid to 15 Geo Stott workers after an out of court settlement between the company and the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

And the company has agreed to take back all of these workers who were retrenched in December last year.

Transvaal branch secretary, Moses Mayekiso said that only 12 workers were back at work at this stage and the union was waiting for the others to return from the rural areas.

In the settlement, the company also agreed to recognise MAWU if more than 50 percent of the workers voted 'Yes' in a secret ballot.

Brother Mayekiso said that in a landslide victory for MAWU 90 percent of the workers voted in favour of being represented by the union.

MAWU now has a majority membership among Iron and Steel producers which consist mainly of Geo Stott, Scaw Metals and Dunsward, Iron and Steel.

THE Khoi/Xhosa alliance succeeded for a time but it had collapsed by 1802. This was because racial divisions were exploited by the British government in Cape Town, and the Xhosa were persuaded to make a separate peace with the British which did not include the Khoi. Also some of the Khoi leaders were bought off with promises of land. Finally, many ordinary Khoi rebels believed the British government would be less oppressive than the settlers on the farms. So, as a result of this division and confusion the rebellion collapsed.

AFTER THE REVOLT

The Khoi hoped that the British government in Cape Town would stop the white farmers treating them so badly, and maybe allow them to return to their old way of life. These hopes were soon crushed. Some of the worst treatment of the Khoi was stopped, but the Khoi were not allowed to regain any of their land. Most of them were therefore forced to continue working on the farms. What the Khoi had failed to understand was that the British were just as determined as the farmers to prevent them leaving the working class.

How did the British tie the Khoi workers to the land? One of the first steps the British took was to make sure that labour contracts between the farmers and the Khoi were put down in writing. These contracts were then registered with the nearest magistrate. In 1809 a new law was also passed called the Caledon Code. This law said that Khoi labourers were free to leave their employers at the end of their contracts, and were allowed to take their children and property with them. Finally, courts were set up throughout the Cape to make sure the new regulations were obeyed.

Some historians believe the Caledon Code led to better conditions for Khoi workers, and see this as a good example of liberal reform. Other historians disagree. Like a lot of liberal legislation the new laws also seem to have had another purpose. Two years before the Caledon Code was passed the import of new slaves to the Cape was stopped by the government. This created a serious labour shortage. The new law was trying to solve the new labour problem. It changed the old system in which every farmer tried to control his labour by himself, and put in its place a new and more efficient system run by government officials.

How was this done?

PASSES

* The law required every Khoi to have 'a fixed place of abode' — that means, a fixed place to live. His home was then registered with the magistrate. This meant that almost all of the Khoi had to live on white farms because they were not permitted to own their own land until 20 years later.

* The law said Khoi workers could not leave their home without a pass from the magistrate. Here we see how passes started with the objective of controlling the movement of workers and making sure each employer had an adequate labour supply. One missionary at the time described how the system worked.

FORCED LABOUR

'According to the regulation, (the Khoi) must be under contract. The contracts are annual (this means they last for a year) and if the Hottentot (i.e. the Khoi) refuses to renew his engagement with his former master when the contract ends, he demands a pass from him. This he shows to the neighbouring landdrost (a government official) from whom he receives another pass permitting him to hire himself to another master. The time given him to find a master may be 2 weeks, 1 week, 1 day or 12 hours. If he does not find a master he must return within the time stated on the pass or he is liable to be punished as a vagabond (a tramp).'

The punishment for this was forced labour for up to 12 months.

* Another law passed 4 years later allowed magistrates to tie children between the ages of 8 and 18 to a farmer if he had housed and fed them when they were very young.

So it seems clear that the Caledon Code in fact introduced a more efficient way of stopping Khoi workers from selling their labour freely. Because labour was in short supply, a free labour market where workers could sell their labour to whoever

The making of the WORKING CLASS



Khoi farm workers (Picture courtesy of Africana library Wits University)

LAST month's article in FOSATU Worker News looked at how the Khoi (who later became the so called 'coloured' people) lost their land and their cattle, and so were forced to work on white farms. The article also showed how the Khoi eventually joined with the Xhosa in 1794 to resist the white settler advance.

paid the highest wages, would have pushed wages up. At the same time the arbitrary brutal behaviour of individual farmers had caused the rebellion of 1794. So now the pass, the magistrate and courts were introduced to solve the problems the owners faced.

The conditions of these Khoi farm labourers did not improve for another 20 years. Then, suddenly, a new law called Ordinance 50 was passed in 1828. By this law, passes were abolished, labour contracts could last for less than twelve months and the Khoi were legally allowed to own land. Why did this happen?

Some writers think that it was because of the pressure of missionaries and liberals in England who publicised the sufferings of the Khoi. But a closer look makes it clear that this was only a small part of the reason. The real pressure for change came from inside South Africa and from workers themselves.

HATED CONDITIONS

Khoi workers had for a long time hated their conditions on the farms. Open resistance had failed in 1802, so workers looked for other ways of easing their exploitation. Many tried desertion, but then the worker faced the problem of the pass. More often workers avoided their employers' demands by pretending illness, by laziness, by destroying the owners property and by getting drunk. In short, they resisted their conditions by being bad workers.

Employers and others continually complained about the 'want of energy' of Khoi workers. Some missionaries suggested the solution was more freedom for the Khoi. One missionary wrote:

'Make the coloured population free.....Permit the natives to choose their own masters ...(give) them the right to their (children)....Allow them to bring their labour to a free market, and the farmers will no longer have occasion to complain of a want of servants.'

PUSH UP WAGES

But the employers knew better. They knew a free labour market would push up wages. It might even allow some Khoi workers to get enough money to buy property and escape working for farmers.

So what caused the change? What freed the Khoi from the pass?

The main reason was the arrival of large numbers of Xhosa from independent nations to work in the Cape Colony. Under Ordinance 49 (the law passed just before the law that freed the Khoi), those migrant labourers were placed under exactly the same controls as had previously oppressed the Khoi. Xhosa workers had to sign written labour contracts, they had to carry a pass, and they could not move around without work.

So the arrival of Xhosa migrant workers allowed the farmers to free the Khoi. They knew these Xhosa workers would flood the labour market. They knew Xhosa workers would compete for jobs with the Khoi. And they knew that in this way wages would be kept down. It was no longer necessary to subject the Khoi to the pass. Workers of one race could be played off against the other, and both would suffer.

Next month we look at how these Xhosa came to work for the farmers and the conditions they found there.

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