

FOSATU WORKER NEWS



THE FRAME STRIKE

Frame Workers confronted by the Police-22nd May

Seven years ago cotton workers in Pinetown made the front page of every national newspaper as they took to the streets in a bitter struggle for a living wage in the Frame Group.

This month again Pinetown/Clermont was shaken violently as more than 5000 workers defied their management and refused to work until they were told what increase they were to get in July.

For more than a week workers clung steadfastly to their stand: "Tell us how much our increase in July is going to be before we return to work."

During the strike workers faced great problems. Riot squad police were used and worker gatherings were dispersed with teargas. Management claimed that the strike was over and 85% of workers had returned to work and this was announced on the radio. Workers were undeterred.

The might of the state was thrown even harder into the battle on management's side. Workers meetings were banned for forty-eight hours by the Chief magistrate of Pinetown and three worker committee members were arrested as they left a meeting with Frame management at the Frametex Mill.

The situation worsened when

the company assisted in forming a large armed impi of workers to march into Clermont on three evenings. There could have been a civil war in Clermont. Finally management cracked and announced the July increase would be 15% with a further 10% in January.

Why did all this happen? Wages in the Cotton Industry are regulated by a Black Labour Relations Wage Order - made by government solely on the recommendations of Employers without workers having any say at all. Workers in the Cotton industry are actually getting poorer. The increases they have been receiving are less than the increase in the cost of living. Between August 1977 and April 1980 wages went up by 20% while the cost of living went up 35,5%. At present the lowest wage at Frame is R18 40 a week and the highest wage is R31 90 a week. The minimum estimated income for a family of 6 in the Durban area is R45 08 a week. Frame workers are certainly not earning a living wage and that is what the strike was about!

"We tried very hard to keep order and organisation so as to negotiate, but management would not do so. This lengthened the strike and angered the workers." Jabulani Gwala, chairman of the Workers Com-

FOSATU DENIED OVERSEAS ASSISTANCE

On 6th June the Government prohibited FOSATU from receiving donations from overseas trade unions or from raising donations in South Africa. They did this in terms of the Fund Raising Act which came into effect in September 1979. FOSATU is the first organisation against which the new Act has been used.

The Government action is a serious one and denies FOSATU the right to receive financial assistance from overseas. This is a clear violation of the ILO Charters and is being strongly attacked by the international trade union movement.

FOSATU spokesmen point out that this appears as an attempt to break FOSATU as an effective national federation. "The people who will benefit will be the parallel unions who get management support and can draw on the finances of the registered unions", says a FOSATU press statement.

FOSATU leaders point out that although this is a very serious blow they are certain FOSATU will not collapse.

"We're sure our members will meet the challenge by supporting their organisation at this difficult time. We'll do all we can to change the situation", says Johnny Mke FOSATU President.

There has been widespread criticism of the action by other trade unions and labour observers. So far the Government seems determined to stick to its hardline.

mittee says. The lesson is so clear - either give workers a say in their conditions of work, or carry on deciding their fate without them. The first is orderly negotiation in the mills, the second inevitably leads to confrontation on the streets. One wonders how long some managements will take to learn this lesson.

The Education Strike

The recent boycotts of classes by thousands of school children and university students of all races has seriously challenged the educational system. Since education is central to society the "education strike" clearly raises wider questions about the society that has produced these inequalities in education.

The children have attacked the second class quality of education for Blacks. They attack the poor facilities, teaching and government and police interference in education. They see this as part of the general oppression of Black people and so are attacking the system.

Since the vast majority of these children are the children of workers and will become workers this is clearly an issue for a worker organisation. Workers identify with the children's criticisms but

raise other important criticisms.

"We as workers don't earn enough to allow ourselves or our children to get a proper education. More than this the education we get ignores workers and their problems and history. The education doesn't really help us as workers, it is more useful for the employers and management", says a workers' spokesman.

So far political leaders seem mainly concerned with packing every one back at school. Minister Steyn wants children back at school but has'nt offered much to solve the problem.

Even Chief Buthelezi seems to see the boycott only as a challenge to the political authority of Inkatha and the Kwa Zulu Government.

Whether they like it or not though, the boycott shows there are limits to everything.

THE CAPE MEAT WORKERS

Six week long struggle continues

800 meat workers from 14 meat firms in Cape Town have been locked out by their employers after demonstrating their support for their fellow workers at Table Bay Cold Storage.

These workers have been fighting for recognition of their democratically elected non racial committee by Table Bay Management.

In April, Western Province General Workers Union (WPMWU) which has 100% membership in the firm sent a letter on behalf of the workers, asking for a meeting with management. Management refused to meet the workers saying that they would only recognise the liaison committee and told the workers to disassociate themselves from the WPGWU.

Table Bay workers stood firm in their demand for recognition of their committee. A large meeting was held to inform other meat workers about the dispute, where it was resolved to notify all meat firms that they would not do the work of Table Bay workers. The meat bosses together then decided to take a hard-line over the Table Bay issue. So when the meat workers staged a one day work stoppage in solidarity with Table Bay workers, the managements fired all 800 meat workers. In fact on their return to work the next day, they were confronted by the riot police.

The workers are continuing to press their demands for unconditional reinstatement and recognition of worker committees at two factories.

The support from the community has come in the form of finance as well as an active campaign to boycott red meat.

Sullivan Signatory Opposes Union Recognition

The Sullivan signatory Colgate stated in their letter to CWIU and in their press statement that "we resist the establishment of trade unions throughout the world". Two days later Mr. Nocker the managing director claimed this was an error and that their policy was "neither to resist or encourage trade unions".

Prior to this statement Colgate had said "no" to a request for recognition from the Chemical Workers' Industrial Union, despite a petition from 180 workers.

Their letter said "We are opposed to the unionisation of our workforce because we firmly believe that as enlightened employers...no trade union can do more for our workers than we can".

They said this even after receiving the petition from CWIU calling on them to recognise the union.

Colgate is a signatory to the Sullivan Principles and all along they have been reported to be one of the top 20 companies that are making good progress in putting these principles into practice.

Colgate has done away with segregation of certain facilities such as toilets, canteens, bathrooms and change-rooms, but as far as the workers are concerned, the Company has violated the major principle by depriving its employees of the right to have

a full say and union representation on their working conditions. "Toilets and such other facilities are not our priorities" said the Chairman of the Colgate Shop Steward Committee.

Colgate claims not to be prepared to recognise any unregistered union. The CWIU has discovered that Colgate already recognised one unregistered union in the Transvaal at one of its plants Helena Rubinstein, to the extent that they had granted stop order facilities. The Union has learnt that when the struggle for recognition at Colgate got strong, management immediately withdrew stop order facilities from the other Union.



"Well everyone makes mistakes I suppose, but their anti CWIU stand is no mistake or accident - that is the real policy. The mistake was to say it plainly in public", said Ms Dlamini Secretary of CWIU (above) commenting on the Colgate statement.

LEYLAND - WAGE INCREASE

Workers in the Leyland factories in Cape Town have received a 7c per hour across the board increase in wages. Joe Foster Secretary of Western Province Motor Assembly Workers Union says "In view of recent price increases and the problems in the Cape the increase is welcomed".

Death leads to safety campaign

All workers at Light Castings in the Transvaal have signed a petition demanding better safety regulations following the death at the factory of Mandla Dlamini, an executive member of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union. His death was a grievous loss to the Union, and workers in his factory are determined to know why this member had to die, and what steps can be taken to improve safety conditions in the plant.

Brother Dlamini's death occurred partly because a safety gate was deliberately taken off by management to improve the speed of production on the machine. Because the gate was off, and the machine had been rewired to ensure that it could work without it, it was possible that a person could be inside the machine, and the machine could operate.

Workers at Light Castings are determined that such an accident should not happen again. All workers have signed a petition, demanding the following things from management:

1. that a safety shop steward be appointed with the right to inspect any machine for lack of safety. This shop steward should also have the right to call in any expert to assist him in making the factory safe.
2. shop stewards shall have the right to have a meeting with management to discuss any problems with safety in the plant.

Clearly its time for organised worker intervention in safety procedures at Light Castings.

SUPREME COURT RULES AGAINST GLACIER BEARINGS

Glacier Management's alternative to trade unions, an "Industrial Relations Committee" received a bitter blow as the Supreme Court ruled against them in Durban.

A dispute between organised workers and management started two years ago when workers elected MAWU shop stewards on to the liaison committee. They then campaigned for the recognition of their union.

Management refused to recognise MAWU and even refused the committee a right to negotiate on any other matter. Mr. Richards the managing director of Glacier Bearings put it in this way in June 1978, "There are two options, either we continue with the present Liaison Committee system without negotiation or an alternative, acceptable to all must be found".

Managements solution was simple. Since recognising MAWU was unacceptable to them the Liaison Committee would stay until workers accepted their new alternative to trade unions - the Industrial Relations Committee.

In less than 60 days they set up the new committee without workers' consent to represent all workers" up to the level

of section manager" on which production workers would be a minority. All negotiations were to take place in this forum.

To stop workers setting up a works committee they kept the liaison committee in name. It never met, no elections were held but management claimed it existed.

Shop Stewards had to bring an application to court for an order declaring the liaison committee non-existent and compelling management to set up a works committee.

Management opposed this saying amongst other things that the liaison committee could only be dissolved with their consent.

The Supreme Court ruled against the company. It declared the liaison committee non-existent and ordered management to comply with the workers' requests within ten days and to pay their costs in the case.

MAWU shop stewards were unanimously elected to the works committee. Management must face realities, whilst they can stubbornly resist MAWU's recognition, they cannot force workers into committees management sets up to frustrate union recognition.

NEW LEATHER UNION FORMED

Over 300 Indian and African leather workers met in Pietermaritzburg on April 19 to form a new non-racial union. The new union the Tanning, Footwear and Allied Workers Union (TFAWU) has applied to affiliate to FOSATU.

Conditions in the leather in-

dustry have been bad for many years and workers have been struggling for their voice to be heard by management. The main aim of the new union is to build a strong organisation among workers on the factory floor so that they can negotiate with their employers.

Rainbow Workers Not Guilty

The Camperdown magistrate was wrong in convicting 52 Rainbow workers of having participated in an unlawful gathering according to the two Supreme Court Judges hearing the workers' appeal in Pietermaritzburg.

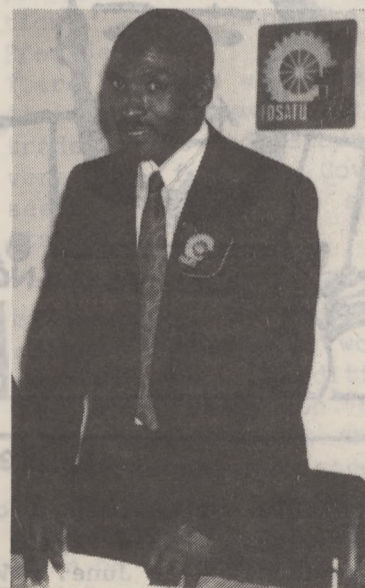
Their convictions and sentences were set aside and the state ordered to refund the workers their R50 00 fines.

The appeal decision was the final episode in the police intervention in the Rainbow Workers' strike over the dismissal a union shop steward, Virginia Ndlovu.

For the workers, however the appeal victory was small compensation. Workers had been bitten by police dogs and gassed when riot police disperse a peaceful gathering of the striking workers.

One worker was hit in the eye by a tear gas cannister and badly hurt. Worse still about 150 workers lost their jobs as the strike failed.

"We lost a lot of ground at Rainbow" a worker spokesman said, "but the struggle for union rights takes time. Whether employers like it or not, we're starting all over again."



Mr. Kraai Chairman of the Inaugural meeting of TFAWU.

RELEASE TRADE UNIONISTS

FOSATU has called for the release of the two Western Province General Workers Union officials David Lewis and Di Cooper. The two were detained in May under the General Laws Amendment Act, which has since been changed to detention under Section 10 of the Internal Security Act.

FOSATU feels that their detention is a step backwards and would increase suspicions about the real intentions of registration. The government

and management must realise that the present strikes are caused by the real problems of workers and not by agitators. We urgently need to organise Black workers to overcome the problems and injustices causing the strikes.

FOSATU deplores the detentions and called for their immediate release.

The ICFTU and other major trade union organisations overseas have also made strong demands for their release.

FORD-UAW HITS BACK

In a long and strongly worded statement the Port Elizabeth branch of UAW hit back at the so-called "action committee chairman," Mr. Makhanda.

"What a joke the workers struggle will be the day the foremen, managers, senior and speciality clerks, section leaders, general foremen are the representatives of workers...We do not care whether you are black or white, if you are with management you can never lead the workers in their struggles with management."

Dealing with statements of the Action Committee which the Branch Executive found most misleading, the statement dismisses the claim made by the action committee that the Branch Executive has been voted out of office at a meeting on the 29th April.

"At this point in time we are legally and constitutionally entrusted with the management of the Branch in Port Elizabeth."

The Branch Executive makes it clear that it is prepared to leave office only if the new opposition at the factory succeeds in persuading the majority of members of their views in a constitutional way. The committee however is far from resigning and commits itself to uniting and organising workers.. "as it is clear that the real struggle of workers in the factory is in sharp conflict with the interests and class position of some of these popular action committees."

FOSATU Unions Leave IMF (SA)

Five FOSATU metal unions have pulled out of the South African Co-ordinating Council of the International Metal Workers Federation (IMF) when it became clear to them that some members of the council were trying to control the FOSATU unions rather than co-operate with them.

The unions will remain members of the IMF which represents more than 14 million metal workers around the world. It is only the SA Co-ordinating Council that they are leaving. The council, was started to discuss matters affecting all metal workers, and build co-operation between the unions.

While most of the unions were prepared to cooperate quite well some of the Unions only wanted to use the Council to push their line. They wanted to control the FOSATU metal unions.

This was seen clearly when the Confederation of Metal and Building Unions went behind the backs of striking workers in the Eveready Factory at Port Elizabeth last year. The CMBU met the Minister the Labour Department and the Eveready Management without consulting the fired workers or the Union (NUMARWOSA) directly involved in the dispute.

Three unions from the Council, have with the help of different management started parallel unions. We know that managements have been using these parallel unions to push out the FOSATU unions.

The five Metal unions that have left the Council are Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) United Automobile and Rubber Workers (UAW) National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers (NUMARWOSA) Engineering and Allied Workers Union (EAWU) and Western Province Motor Assembly Workers Union (WPMWU).

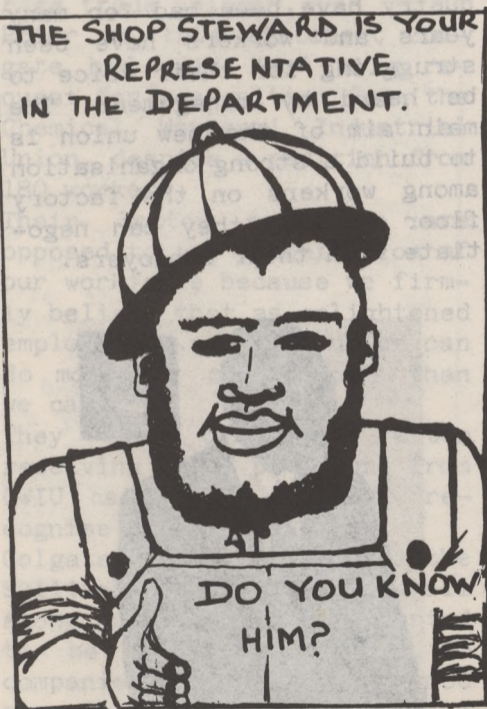
These unions have decided to work together and to discuss all important matters affecting workers in the metal industry. This will help to unite workers in the Metal Industry throughout South Africa.

TEXTILE PROGRESS IN EASTERN PROVINCE

The National Union of Textile Workers Branch in the Eastern Province set up on 13th April is progressing well. The struggle has not been easy.

The Union was recently granted stop order facilities at Industex in Port Elizabeth and has since discussed other procedures with management.

Problems occurred at Veldspun in Uitenhage where there was a work stoppage from the 23rd to 25th April. Following this a meeting between the Union and the Company agreed to a referendum in the factory for workers to choose which of the two unions organising there, they wanted.



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*Veldspun NUTW overwhelming victory in referendum. Company negotiates. *Volkswagen 4000 strike on 16th June over wages. Sauls saying banning of report back meeting to blame. *Frametex three worker leaders case remanded to 24th June. *WPGWU two more trade unionists Morris and Frankish detained. FOSATU condemns action. *Rely Precision 55 MAWU members in Boksburg in work stoppage. Workers charged for illegal striking. Union provides legal representation. Case remanded to 10th July.

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