

FOSATU

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Federation of South African Trade Unions



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Over 100 000 mourn the death of Raditsela



Union comrades carry Andries Raditsela to his final resting place

SONGS about worker power filled the air at Tsakane, as more than 30 000 mourners bade farewell to Andries Raditsela — FOSATU regional vice-president who died of head injuries shortly after being released from police detention.

And in factories around the country, over 100 000 workers stopped work and held memorial services.

Police tried to stop people attending the funeral. They told bus companies not to take people to Tsakane. And the trains stopped at Dunswart — more than 20 kilometres away.

In spite of this, people streamed in to Tsakane like a flood. Some came by cars,

taxis, buses, but most came on foot.

The Tsakane Methodist church was filled until it could hold no more. People perched on windowsills, stood on benches — every little space was taken up.

Before the service, groups of workers carrying colourful union banners marched up and down the road singing FOSATU songs.

Placards said 'Kill Apartheid Not Detainees' and 'Army and Police Out of Townships'.

Overhead two police helicopters circled the church. Every now and then a couple of Caspirs laden with police in riot gear drove past. The funeral crowd

watched them warily.

Inside, a small group of workers wearing union T-shirts encircled the coffin and held up their fists in a salute to Andries Raditsela.

Next to the Chemical Workers Industrial Union banner, another banner proclaimed 'Andries Raditsela 1954-1985 He lived, worked and died for the people. His blood has watered the tree of our struggle.'

Throughout the three-hour service workers sang and chanted 'Raditsela is ours! Power is ours! United we will win!' Loudspeakers relayed the service to all outside.

In his speech FOSATU president, Chris Dlamini told mourners, 'the govern-

ment is in crisis. They have to bring the police and the army into the townships.'

He attacked employers for staying silent over the death of Andries Raditsela.

'The workers work hard to produce profit for the bosses, yet none of them has condemned the death of Andries.'

'They claim that they do not want to get involved in political issues. They go overseas and say that they give us good jobs.'

'But, it seems that the profits produced by workers are being used by the government to buy guns to kill us,' he added.

'Today's situation needs us to unite.'

'The distribution of

wealth is not fair. The majority get very little while a few get more.'

'I'm convinced that until we unite and mobilise all sectors of our people we will not be free,' Chris Dlamini concluded.

A single church bell tolled as union pall bearers carried the coffin out of the church between rows of workers who silently held their fists in the air. Behind the coffin a FOSATU banner waved gently in the wind.

The dust filled the air as 30 000 people walked the three kilometres to the graveyard. The singing started up again and some

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of the crowd broke into a chanting jog.

Lining the road were buckets, plastic containers and tins filled with water, put out just in case the police decide to use teargas.

Police presence

Police kept a low profile, for the moment. One Caspir with a 'sneeze machine' was parked in a side road close to the graveyard and on an overlooking hill nearby were five or six more Caspirs.

The huge crowd which filled the graveyard sang 'Nkosi Sikelela' as the coffin was slowly lowered into the grave. They then peacefully walked back up the hill towards the church.

Meanwhile, in factories in the Western and Eastern Cape, Natal and in some Transvaal factories, at least 100 000 workers heeded the FOSATU call to stop work and hold a short memorial service.

The stoppages varied from 15 minutes to two hours.

FOSATU called on Transvaal employers to grant workers 'paid bereavement leave' so that they could attend the funeral.



Banners held high, the mass procession walks slowly down Ndabezitha Street to the graveyard

Thousands march at funeral

Scores of factories, particularly on the East Rand, were forced to close when their entire workforce stayed away to attend the funeral.

At others just the shop stewards were sent while workers held memorial stoppages at their factories. Even shop stewards from as

far as the Sasol factory at Secunda attended.

But, radio, TV and the commercial press deliberately attempted to underplay this huge demonstration of worker protest.

On the day of the funeral TV and radio carried reports saying only 5 000 people

attended.

The next day, the commercial press carried huge headlines saying 'Workers reject stayaway plea', 'Unions ignored on day of Raditsela funeral' and 'Stayaway is a failure' in spite of the fact that FOSATU had not called for a stayaway.

The nationwide stoppage, which was bigger than the Neil Aggett protest three years ago, received little coverage in any of the newspapers.

It is clear from this that the commercial press, radio and TV can never be trusted to represent workers' interests.

Detained by police — dead 3 days later

ON May 4, a Saturday morning, while sitting in a hired car chatting to a friend in Tsakane township Andries Raditsela was confronted by police — a few hours later he was lying unconscious on the stoep of the Administration Board offices — three days later he died in Baragwanath hospital.

What happened? From eyewitness accounts FOSATU Worker News has pieced together this story.

At about 9 am, a police hippo stopped and demanded to know from Andries why he was driving a car with a Natal registration. They accused him of stealing it. He explained to them that it was a car hired by

FOSATU.

Another hippo pulled up. The eyewitnesses claim that a policeman came up to Andries and started slapping him.

People started screaming and one young man asked the policeman what he was doing. Both he and Andries were then thrown into one of the hippos.

Andries' mother on hearing that he had been taken by the police sent his younger brother to search for him.

At about noon they found him at the Tsakane Administration Board offices which are at present being used as a police station.

His mother found him lying

twisted on the stoep. He was unconscious, his face was swollen and he was bleeding.

She shook Andries several times and after a while he regained consciousness. But when his mother and brother tried to pick him up, he could not balance himself.

Andries' mother tried to find out from the police what had happened. They just told her to go.

At 4 pm the police came and told Mrs Raditsela that her son was critically ill and that she must go to Baragwanath hospital immediately.

But when the family went to Baragwanath they could not find Andries — his name was

not in the hospital records. They tried the Far East Rand hospital but he was not in their records either.

It was only at 1 pm on Monday that Andries was found in a ward at Baragwanath hospital. He was in a coma and his breathing was being assisted by a machine.

At 2.15 pm Andries died.

Until shortly before his death, Andries was being held under section 50 of the Internal Security Act which allows for 48-hour detention in order to 'combat state of unrest'.

The Chemical Workers Industrial Union later found out that Andries was only admitted to the Far East Rand Hospital

at 6.45 pm on Saturday night — nearly seven hours after he was seen lying unconscious at the Administration Board Offices. He was then transferred to Baragwanath Hospital.

A post mortem held at Diepkloof mortuary established that he died of a brain haemorrhage.

Calls for a public inquiry into Andries' death were turned down by the government, instead the police held their own secret internal inquiry.

According to the Minister for Law and Order, Mr Louis Le Grange, the results of the police inquiry have been handed to the Attorney General.

Litemaster workers win R800 000 in biggest claim awarded by court

IN the biggest backpay claim ever awarded by the industrial court, Wadeville company Litemaster Electrical has been ordered to pay 65 Metal and Allied Workers Union members close on R800 000.

The company has also been told to take back the 65 workers who it dismissed in July 1983 — nearly two years ago.

However, Litemaster has informed the union that it intends to ask the Supreme Court to review the industrial court's decision.

Thk move has been attacked by MAWU as a 'delaying tactic which will only result in increased hardship for workers'.

The workers were sacked when they protested against the company's refusal to negotiate retrenchments with MAWU.

Litemaster had insisted that retrenchment was a management prerogative and refused to listen to the workers' proposal that jobs be shared.

For the past two years, the workers have remained united in spite of tremendous hardships caused by unemployment, influx control and the lack of legal accommodation.

Meanwhile, Rossburgh company, S A Fabrics, has paid out R6 500 to a dismissed union shop steward in an out-of-court settlement with the National Union of Textile Workers.

The union argued that Dominique Ninela had been dismissed for 'a relatively minor offence' and that the company had not followed the accepted practice of having a senior shop steward present at all dismissals.

Rolling strike wins motor workers interim increase

A ROLLING strike by Eastern Cape motor workers has won them an interim wage increase in the face of an industrial council deadlock.

The first to go out were 4 000 Volkswagen workers. They returned to work twelve days later on April 30 when the company offered a 14c to 24c increase backdated from February 1.

Meanwhile, General Motors' workers at a meeting on April 18 sent a letter to management demanding a response to their demands for a wage increase by 10 am on April 25.

On April 24, General Motors informed the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union that it would be prepared to meet them that same day. GM's first offer of a 12c to 22c increase on May 1 was re-

jected by the union and when no settlement had been reached by 10 am the following day the whole factory, consisting of some 3 000 workers, downed tools.

Negotiations between the company and NAAWU continued late into the evening and GM eventually agreed to a 14c to 24c increase backdated from February 1.

The following day the General Motors' workers accepted this increase and returned to work.

Negotiations with the only other major manufacturer in the area, Ford, began on April 26.

Ford offered a 14c to 24c increase but only from August 1. When shop stewards reported this to the Neave plant, about 2 000 workers stopped work

and left the factory.

Ford workers returned to work after the company agreed to pay the increase from May 1.

Since November last year, the unions and the motor bosses have been negotiating a new agreement to cover the Eastern Cape's giant motor plants.

However, the employers have failed to come up with a wage offer which will satisfy NAAWU members.

A new attempt to break the deadlock began on May 10 when the industrial council met to discuss the plant-level wage increases.

NAAWU's Les Kettleidas said new wage proposals had been submitted to the employers and 'in a week or two there will be another industrial council meeting to hear their response.'

Legal strike

AT 7.45 am on Tuesday April 30 some 700 day shift workers at British-owned BTR Sarmcol left their machines and went and sat down in the canteen. About 200 night shift workers later joined them.

The workers had had enough. For two years they have been trying to get the bosses at this Howick factory to sign a simple union recognition agreement.

Short strikes, threatened court action, mediation, a conciliation board and an overtime ban have been unable to persuade management to get a move on and sign the agreement.

Numerous recognition agreements similar to the one on the table at Sarmcol have been signed at FOSATU organised factories.

And a Barlows company has found this particular agreement so acceptable that it has handed it over to a union as the starting point for recognition discussions.

So, what has been the hold up? Metal and Allied Workers Union shop stewards, Pheneas Sibiyi and Philip Dladla, told

FOSATU Worker News that management saw the strike clause as a 'big problem'.

'In order to give workers some protection, we have demanded that during a legal strike the company must not selectively hire or fire, and in a wildcat strike, the union must be given a certain period to sort out the problem before management takes any action,' they said.

'But, management accused us of trying to take away their power and give it to the workers,' the shop stewards said.

This reaction is surprising coming from a British company — workers in Britain are able to strike without any fear of dismissal.

'We have been negotiating this recognition agreement since June 1983. It's been too long. So, when the conciliation board failed we gave management five days to sign the agreement. When we got no positive response, we decided to go on a legal strike,' the shop stewards said.

Will the strike be a long one? 'Yes, if management won't

Sarmcol workers' patience runs out

sign,' the shop stewards answered. 'Workers won't go back until the agreement is signed.'

The fact that it is a legal strike has made little difference to Sarmcol. Two days after it began, the company fired all the strikers and then locked them out of the factory.

But, the company has not had it all its own way. Attempts to woo back the strikers have been unsuccessful and hiring scabs from the area has proved impossible. Sarmcol has been forced to use white women staff members to operate the fork lift trucks.

The strikers' call for a boycott of all local shops and businesses has been backed by the entire community of Mpophomeni township. In the press, a supermarket owner admitted that his takings had dropped by 50 percent and another said if the boycott continued she would have to close down.

As FOSATU Worker News goes to press, the strike is entering its fourth week, but the company is still refusing to hold any discussions with the union.



Sarmcol workers at one of their daily strike meetings

New deal reduces hours and pays night allowance

THE Transport and General Workers Union recently won a new deal for Anglo American Property Services workers which includes a reduction in working hours and a R1 night shift allowance.

The new deal reduces working hours from 45 to 42,5 hours per week without any loss of pay — a significant step forward in the fight for a shorter working week.

The negotiations which began towards the end of January were held up by the company's refusal to pay a night shift allowance.

However after the issue was referred to mediation, Ampro agreed to pay R1 per shift to all

nightworkers to compensate for the inconvenience of working nights. An extra three day's leave was also granted to nightworkers.

In terms of the new deal:

- all workers will get an 11,5 percent wage increase.
- the pensionable age for women cleaners has been reduced to 60.
- all workers on reaching ten year's service will get a cash benefit of R100.
- workers who are transferred to buildings some distance away from their original place of employment can now apply for a transport allowance.
- the company has also agreed to give most workers a half-day-off on May Day.

NCS Plastics destroys 200 jobs in Pinetown

ANOTHER South African employer is 'running away' to the homelands at the cost of over 200 jobs in the urban area.

Pinetown's largest chemical employer, NCS Plastics, is shutting down its packaging division and moving it to Gazankulu.

In a recent statement, the Chemical Workers Industrial Union said that 'NCS must now be marked as one of apartheid's backers and a full supporter of the bantustanization of our country'.

The union said it was 'nonsensical' for a country to follow a decentralisation policy where the taxpayer faced a double

burden.

'The taxpayer is financing the luxurious incentives offered to industries which relocate and also the cost of providing a new infrastructure and housing in the decentralisation area.'

'At the same time the urban areas with established infrastructure and settled communities like Pinetown have their jobs ripped out of them leaving only the black scars of unsolvable unemployment,' the union statement said.

'The only ones who benefit are profiteers like NCS Plastics who exploit the apartheid system and who are not prepared to face their social responsibilities,' the CWIU concluded.

Sugar wages bettered

THE Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union has bettered the wages settled on at the sugar industry's industrial council in its separate negotiations with major sugar employer, C G Smith.

The agreement which covers over 2 000 C G Smith workers

In addition to this, the living-out allowance which is paid to workers who don't live in company hostels has been increased from R30 to R40 per month.

has increased the wages on the lower grades by 15 percent and has hiked the food allowance from R55 to R65 per month.

International squeeze on Transvaal Alloys

INTERNATIONAL pressure on Transvaal Alloys and its German parent company, Nord Deutsche Affinerie, is increasing but it is still refusing to take back the dismissed members of the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

Last year MAWU launched an international campaign against Transvaal Alloys which has won the support of the German chemical union, I G Chemie, and the German government.

After his recent visit to South Africa, I G Chemie's Dieter Honerhoff raised the MAWU dispute at a Supervisory Board meeting of Nord Deutsche Affinerie.

And the German government

has criticised the company for breaking the EEC and ILO Codes of Conduct and has advised it to take back the 200 dismissed workers.

However, the company has told the union that it would only take back the dismissed workers when jobs become available.

A MAWU spokesperson said 'It could take five years before all the workers are taken back.'

Transvaal Alloys has also said that any worker affected by the unhealthy conditions at the Middelburg mine and vanadium plant should just claim from the Workmen's Compensation.

One of MAWU's major com-

plaints against Transvaal Alloys was that many of the workers had become ill from breathing acid fumes and dust because the company provided no proper ventilation or masks.

Meanwhile, Nord Deutsche Affinerie is the centre of a pollution scandal involving its copper refinery in Hamburg, Germany.

Investigations have revealed that for years the refinery has been spewing out a poisonous substance which has spread over most of the city.

'Clearly this company cares nothing for people. If it is not prepared to provide reasonable conditions for workers then it must get out of South Africa,' the MAWU spokesperson said.

Another first for clothing workers

CONTRARY to what TUCSA's Garment Workers Industrial Union (GWIU) believes, factory-floor negotiations have not caused chaos in the clothing industry — instead they have led to new worker rights being won.

Workers at Pinetown factory, James North, were the first clothing workers to be granted an exemption from the industry's closed shop in order to join the National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW).

They are now the first cloth-

ing workers to be covered by a retrenchment agreement which pays a severance pay of one week's wages for each year of service.

The TUCSA union opposed NUTW's exemption application arguing that to have negotiations at plant level as well as at the industrial council would cause chaos in the Natal clothing industry.

The GWIU is the only union sitting on the industrial council and it has persistently blocked NUTW's applications to join

the council.

Only through industrial court action was NUTW able to win plant-level negotiating rights for its members at James North.

In terms of the new retrenchment agreement, James North has agreed to: discuss retrenchments with the union; retrench according to the principle of Last In First Out (LIFO); and to take back retrenched workers before employing anybody else.

Worker control in action

IN a demonstration of 'worker control' in action, hundreds of Metal and Allied Workers Union shop stewards were bused to the metal industry's wage talks on May 23.

'We felt we had to take the shop steward chairmen along in order to get a proper mandate,' a MAWU spokesperson said. 'In future, we hope to involve more members.'

A hall was hired right next to where the industrial council negotiations took place and throughout the day the union negotiating team caucused with the shop stewards.

The presence of the shop stewards was a major departure from the usual undemocratic practices of industrial councils.

The wage talks, though, have

once again deadlocked.

The metal employer's offer of a 17c increase on the bottom rate, bringing the minimum up to R1,90, and 40c at the top, has been rejected by the International Metalworkers Federation joint union caucus.

And Seifsa, the metal employer's association, is refusing to hold any further meetings.



A trumpet player adds his own brand of entertainment to the Durban May Day celebrations



Singing workers arrive at the Maritzburg rally



Rocklands Civic Centre packed to capacity on May 1

MAY 1



Who's the aggressor? Armed police prevent workers leaving the Johannesburg May Day meeting

In the biggest May Day celebrations this country has ever seen, over 20 000 workers nationwide have pledged to win May 1 (Workers Day) as a paid public holiday.

Workers flocked to meetings held in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Ladysmith, Estcourt, Secunda, Mamelodi, Johannesburg and on the East Rand.

The South African working class has come a long way since the first May Day celebrations in 1904.

In those early days only white workers, organised in trade unions and some small socialist parties, held meetings.

Now, May Day is ignored by the white right-wing trade unions. It has been left to the independent non-racial trade unions to remind all workers of the great tradition of International Labour Day (May Day).

May Day has always been a day to remember that workers do not struggle alone. This is why unity figured so prominently in many May Day speeches.

The South African working class is beginning to unite. Soon a trade union federation will be formed, the likes of which has never before been seen in this country's labour history.

The workers' struggle, though, is not only limited to South Africa. May Day is also a day for workers worldwide to remember their common struggles.

The May Day tradition

began with workers in America demanding an eight-hour day.

Workers in South Africa are now calling for an eight-hour day (40-hour week) and in many of the May Day meetings this was raised as a demand.

In Britain and Europe, workers are also fighting for a shorter working week — in Germany it is for a 35-hour week. They also believe that shorter working hours will create more jobs and hold-off the common enemy of unemployment.

Workers throughout the world are fighting the same battle — for a better society for workers. To echo the slogan which appeared on many May Day banners, 'Workers of the World Unite'.

THE union so powerful, the union so powerful... sang a group of dancing jubilant women as still more people streamed into the Rocklands Civic Centre in Mitchell's Plain.

It was May Day and here in Cape Town workers had come from as far away as Malmesbury and Tulbagh to join in the celebration.

The crowds eventually swelled to about 3 000, making it one of the biggest worker meetings Cape Town has seen.

The meeting was organised by the seven unions in the Western Cape which are part of the planned new federation of unions.

The meeting was very different from the one held last year. Worker songs and shouts of 'Amandla' punctuated the speeches and there was dancing in the crowded aisles.

Workers from the General Workers Union put on a play showing the differences between organisation and individual struggle.

In countless songs, workers said they were there to celebrate, commemorate and commit themselves to ongoing struggle.

Against a vibrant backdrop of union banners, John Ernstzen of the 11 400-strong Cape Town Municipal Workers Association (CTMWA) told people he was proud to be standing there.

'I feel proud because I'm a worker and involved in the workers' struggle. Not that it's nice to be a worker,' he added, 'it is hard. But I'm proud because workers in South Africa have decided to get up and fight.'

'1985 is an important year because thousands of workers have decided to finish with waiting. History has taught us that nobody can better the workers' lot, only workers can do this.'

He pointed out the difference between May Day and other special days, Christmas, for example. 'People say Christmas is a day of forgetting and forgiving. For us, May Day is not a day of forgetting, but of remembrance.'

'We cannot forget what happened in Uitenhage, Craddock and Crossroads. To the people of these areas

we say: your struggle is ours. To the ruling class we say: the children shot in Langa and Crossroads are not just children of Langa and Crossroads, they are all our children.'

'You cannot divide us anymore. We have built unity. If you touch one worker you touch us all.'

He urged workers to strengthen their unions and build the new federation so that they could strengthen their struggle.

'The federation is not a pretty ornament. It is not there for show. It is a vehicle to transport us to victory. If a union is like a car, the federation is like a plane.'

But May Day was not just a celebration. It was also a time to pay tribute to those who had died for the workers' struggle.

'Who can forget Neil Aggett and others who have fallen?' he asked. 'The only way to pay tribute to them is to continue to fight.'

May Day was also a time of commitment. Some of the things workers in South Africa were struggling for had been won long ago by workers in other countries.

'About 100 years ago, workers in America fought for an eight-hour working day. Why do some of us still have to work 24 hours? We must fight for shorter working hours so that we can spend time with our families.'

Other things he said ought to be fought for were: ● May Day as a public holiday.

- the right to organise freely and picket in support of demands.
- decent housing and schooling.
- an end to pass laws, homelands and colour discrimination.

'Part of our long term struggle, comrades, is to fight for a new society where there will be no exploitation and poverty.' He said the struggle was for workers to control their own destiny.

'Why is it that workers produce the wealth of the country but can't have a say in what happens to that wealth?' he said.

ONE union, one industry... was the May Day message from Port Elizabeth as over 1 000 workers gathered in a local church hall.

The unity unions, which organised the May Day rally, had serious difficulties getting a venue as the Director of Housing, Eddie Samuels, refused to allow the workers to use the Gelvendale Community Centre main hall even though the hall was available.

However, the rally went ahead.

In keeping with the principle of 'One union, one industry', which is one of the conditions of the new federation, there were speakers from each of the different industrial sectors — chemical, commercial and service, transport, food and metal.

They spoke on the mean-

ing of May Day, woman's rights, worker control, worker unity and the new federation, trade unions and the struggle in the community and, finally, workers' and students' task in the working class struggle.

Numerous resolutions were adopted at the PE rally including support for the Brazilian workers' struggle for collective bargaining rights at the Firestone factory in Sao Paulo.

At the rally, workers pledged to campaign for an end to oppression and exploitation and 'that apartheid, the poison in South African society, be scrapped and the practice thereof be made an offence and illegal'.

Other campaign demands were: that a reasonable maternity leave be granted on full pay; that workers be paid a living wage as determined by the needs of workers; and that unemployed workers be paid reasonable unemployment benefits for as long as they are unemployed.

WORKERS should have their own leaders and those leaders must be the workers themselves. It is only then that the workers' struggle shall prosper, said Maxwell Xulu, Metal and Allied Workers Union vice-president.

He was speaking to the 5 000-strong crowd who gathered to celebrate May Day at Currie's Fountain in Durban. 'Can I refer to the differ-

ences between a class struggle and a popular struggle? Brother Xulu continued.

'You find that in the popular struggle you will get leaders who you cannot be very sure who elected them.'

'But if you talk about the shop stewards who are worker leaders, definitely every shop steward who is here knows who elected him and who he is responsible to.'

Brother Xulu said that unfortunately in South Africa employers were commonly known to be white.

'And the reason we cannot think of it any other way is because we are directed to look at racism rather than the class struggle.'

He said workers were told by various popular leaders that 'we are with you in the struggle' and 'you must fight for worker rights'.

'But, some of the very same leaders of certain struggles for the liberation of workers are black employers and I am sure that none of the workers here today are employees of black employers. Because black employers will never allow them to come to May Day.'

'So, I cannot see how they can lead me into liberation when they have not even liberated their own employees,' Brother Xulu said.

'The best negotiator for a worker or the best leader for a worker will be one of the workers,' he concluded.

The May Day celebrations in Durban got off to an early start.

Although, the rally was

only meant to officially begin at 1 pm, workers at a number of factories decided to declare May Day as a public holiday and started streaming in to the stadium from about eight that morning.

A banner along the back of the main stand warned 'Employers and government beware! Workers are going to crush you'.

Early in the afternoon when the crowd had swelled to about 5 000, workers marched singing around the football pitch.

Then, the events got underway. These included worker plays, workers reciting their poetry, choirs, a group of young gum boot dancers and the popular singing and dancing group 'Abafana Bomoya'.

In Natal May Day meetings were also held at Pietermaritzburg, Ladysmith and Estcourt.

About 3 000 workers at Maritzburg heard Sister Mkhize, chairperson of the Prestige shop stewards committee, suggest that workers could only overcome factory and community problems if they united as FOSATU 'both in the factories and outside'.

She said that workers must organise themselves so that they were represented at all levels of society.

Workers must create and use their own platforms but they must also protect their platforms from people who wanted to use worker power for their own ends, Sister Mkhize added.

SINGING and chanting workers leaving a lunchtime May Day meeting held at Khotso House in the centre of Johannesburg were confronted by riot police armed with guns and batons.

The police, who had cordoned off the area using dogs, forced the workers back into the building and then allowed only a few to leave at a time.

About 500 workers attended the meeting which was addressed by speakers from CCAWUSA, FOSATU, AZACTU and the UDF unions.

All spoke of the need for unity. One speaker condemned capitalism as the root cause of workers' misery.

Jethro Dlalisa, regional chairman of the Transport and General Workers Union, read out the aims of the worker movement. These were:

- to secure economic and social justice for all workers.
- to strive for the building of a united working class regardless of race, sex or creed.
- to encourage all workers to join trade unions and to develop solidarity among all workers.
- to secure just standards of living, social security, and fair conditions of work for the working class as a whole.
- to encourage the education and training of all workers so as to further the interests of the working class.

to change, advance or oppose any law, action or policy of the government or any other grouping in the interests of the working class.

At Morena Stores at Katlehong about 500 workers mainly from P G Glass heard shop stewards Ronald Mofokeng and Baznaar Moloi speak about the origins of May Day. This was followed by a braai and a film.

Under the banner 'Workers of the World Unite. Solidarity in Action' about 2 000 workers from Sasol packed into the township hall at Secunda.

This was the biggest meeting held at Secunda since the November stay-away where 6 000 workers were sacked.

Hundreds of disappointed Sasol miners were unable to attend the meeting because of the lack of transport.

Chemical Workers Industrial Union organisers and FOSATU president Chris Dlamini spoke and in between the Kelloggs choir (nicknamed the K Team) and a CWIU choir sang.

At the weekend more May Day meetings were held in various townships in the Transvaal — these were at Sebokeng, Katlehong, Regina Mundi, Mamelodi and Brits.

At the Brits meeting, which was organised by the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union, workers called for: the improvement of social benefits like UIF and pensions; an improvement in wages; and for a shorter working week.

The making of the

In part twelve we saw that the rise of industry led to a demand for more semi-skilled and unskilled workers. These workers — black and white — formed industrial unions to protect themselves against exploitation by capitalists. The black unions were not as strong and well organised as today. They were not able to defend themselves against State repression and the mass unemployment of the Great Depression (recession) which started in 1929. The registered unions were also hard hit by the recession but were able to use their greater legal rights in order to survive.

The new industrial unions broke with the traditions of the old white unions. They wanted to organise all workers in their industries — to build the strength of the workers against the bosses. This line was adopted by the South African Trades and Labour Council (TLC) which was formed in 1930. Its constitution was non-racial. At its first conference the TLC called for full legal recognition for African trade unions under the Industrial Conciliation Act and an end to discriminatory legislation. The Council united the majority of registered unions on the basis of progressive policies for 20 years.

During the Depression the TLC condemned the industrial council system as collaboration. It protested against State interference with African trade unions and took a strong stand against fascism. The TLC gave money to African unions, for example during the African laundry workers' strike of 1934.

In 1944 the TLC drew up a Workers Charter for all workers irrespective of race. Annual conferences called for campaigns to organise all workers on industrial lines irrespective of colour. However, resolutions were easy. Words needed to be matched by concrete actions. In the 1940's individual registered unions such as the Garment Workers Union, the Food and Canning Workers Union, the National Union of Distributive Workers and the Textile Workers Industrial Unions, took African women into membership (due to a loophole in the law). They also sometimes cooperated with African unions over wage negotiations or strikes. In 1944 the white South African Electrical Workers Association instructed its members not to scab on striking African workers at the UFP power stations.

Cooperation was most developed in some of the local committees set up by the TLC. Veteran trade unionist, Bill Andrews explained this: 'These local committees are ideal as they have local autonomy (control). Being composed mainly of delegates from the shops and factories, they are largely free from bureaucratic dominance, are in close touch with the

everyday problems of the worker, and can be removed easily, if found unsatisfactory.'

In 1946 the Witwatersrand and Vereeniging local committees of the TLC gave full support to the great strike by the African Mineworkers Union. However, there was still a large racist group inside the TLC. So the 1946 strike was condemned by the Executive of the Trades and Labour Council. What a betrayal! Despite all the resolutions, the TLC remained under conservative control. Most African unions did not join: they were not allowed to use their own languages at conferences; white racists attended; and affiliation fees were high. Consequently African workers formed their own federation — the Council of Non European Trade Unions (see next issue of FOSATU Workers News). Later in 1954, after 20 years of following a non-racial line, the majority of the TLC voted to exclude Africans and form TUCSA (Trade Union Council of South Africa).

The Industrial Conciliation Act 1924

Under this Act African workers were refused the right to form legally recognised registered trade unions. All other workers could form registered unions which gave them some legal rights. This law was made to divide workers against each other. The law was changed in 1979.

The State used force against African workers. It tried to co-opt the registered unions through the industrial council system. This was bureaucratic and removed union officials from the control of the workers. But some registered unions — like Solly Sach's Garment Workers Union — still remained militant.

How can we understand these contradictions in the TLC? To do this we must analyse its different parts. The Trades and Labour Council had in it

three main groups: the industrial unions, the craft unions and the racist unions.

The craft unions

South Africa's oldest and strongest unions were formed by skilled workers such as engineers, printers and moulders. They were privileged compared to other workers but they were still workers not supervisors. The capitalists depended on these workers because the production process needed skilled workers. This gave skilled workers a strong bargaining position. They could not easily be replaced. The bosses did not like this and tried to undermine the power of the skilled workers by introducing machinery. Their machines could be operated by less skilled workers at lower wages.

During the 1920's and 1930's the craft unions militantly resisted attempts by employers and the State to introduce machines. In this they were assisted by strong organisation and the fact that the bosses still needed their skills. Although skilled workers often held racist views, the craft unions did not call on the government to introduce colour bars to protect their members. For all these reasons the craft unions were able to ally with the more militant industrial unions. In 1942 the engineering union agreed to present the demands of the African unions to the industrial council. In 1943 the Ironmoulders Society adopted a resolution 'that the Minister for Labour be requested to give full recognition to African trade unions'.

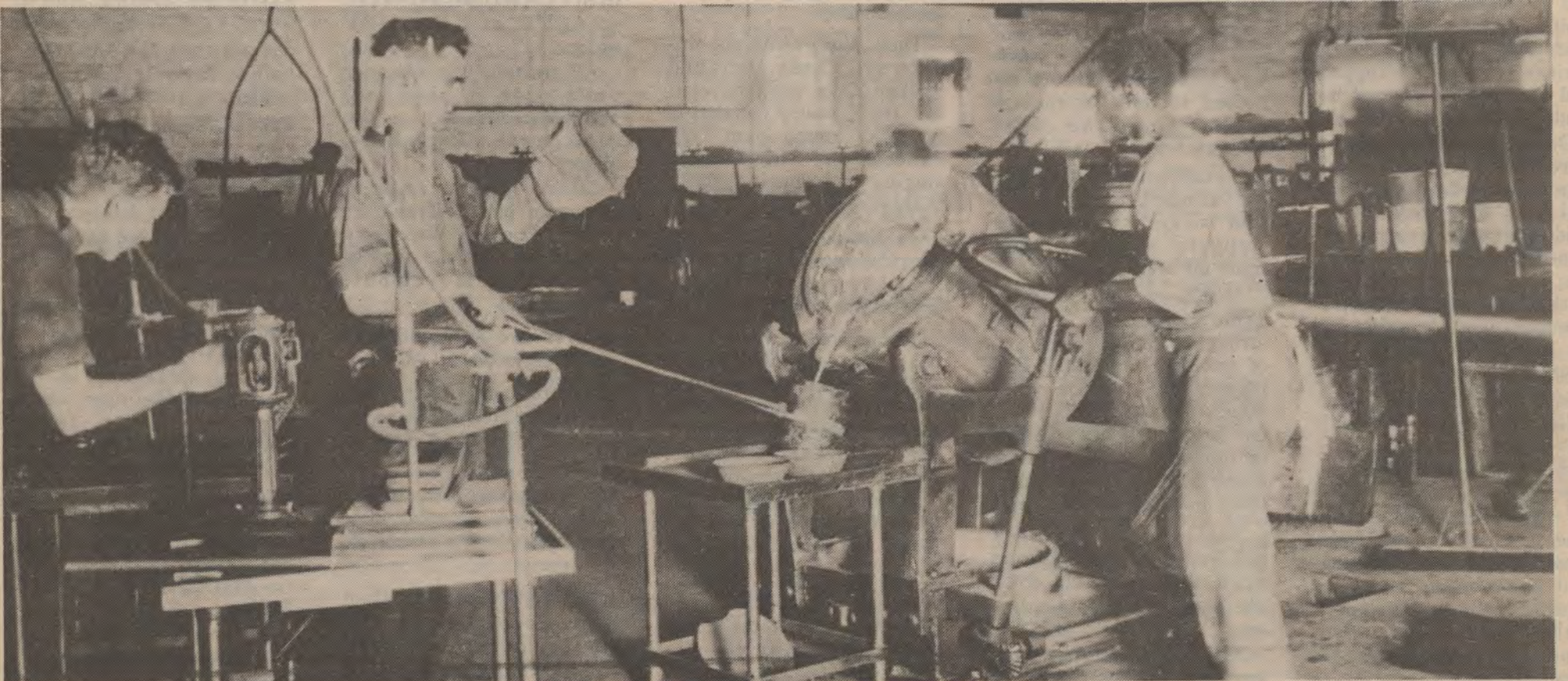
This alliance began to break down in the 1940's. Industry expanded and was more mechanised. The old craft workers could not work as fast as these new machines. More and more unskilled and semi-skilled workers came into industry to operate the machines. The craft workers now became supervisors. They were employed to police the black workers under their control. As a result the craft

workers lost their militancy. The craft unions used their powers to exclude African workers from higher grades. This racist strategy led to a reactionary line towards independent African unions. One leader of the Ironmoulders said: 'the natives will have to be controlled by the established unions.'

The racist unions

Other unions had been racist from the start. The white Mineworkers Union (MWU) represented supervisors who were employed because of their race and not because of their skills. The MWU's strategy was to call on the government for legal colour bars to protect their members.

Since the late nineteenth century unskilled poor



PART THIRTEEN: THE TRADES AND LABOUR COUNCIL

WORKING CLASSES

white Afrikaners came to the towns to seek work. Many of these people worked for the government, on the railways, or in State-owned industries like Iscor. They owed their jobs to the government. These workers never had the strong bargaining position of the craft workers. Therefore they adopted the racist strategy of the MWU. The government's 'civilised labour' policy gave them jobs in preference to black workers. These racist unions — like Spoorbond on the railways and Yster en Staal in the steel industry — were not politically independent and relied on State favours. As a result they played only a small role in the TLC. They left the TLC when they fell under the control of the Nationalists.

The Workers Charter 1944

- The right of all people to guaranteed full employment under decent conditions.
- The right of all people to live in well built houses, to have good food, sufficient clothing and adequate medical attention.
- The right of all people to leisure, with adequate recreational and cultural amenities.
- The right of all people to free primary, secondary, technical and university education.
- The right of all people to freedom of association, freedom of speech and assembly and movement, and freedom of worship.
- The right of all people to security from loss of income through old age, unemployment, and incapacity to work.

The industrial unions

However, not all unskilled white workers belonged

to racist unions. We saw in part twelve that some of these workers joined more radical industrial unions, like the Garment Workers Union. These workers worked for bad employers who paid low wages. They had to organise a union of all the workers and struggle to improve their conditions. So for many years, unions like the GWU, the leatherworkers, distributive workers etc were militant and supported progressive policies. It was the registered industrial unions which formed the backbone of the TLC and held it to a non-racial line for 20 years.

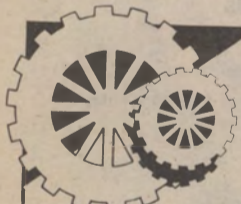
By the late 1940's the unity of the TLC was breaking apart. In 1947 and 1948 the racist unions left the TLC to form the Coordinating Council. Bill Andrews said: 'the departure of the most reactionary white unions is no loss. Indeed an all-out attack against the trade union right is necessary to create an organisation of trade unions who really intend and are able to conduct the coming struggle against the nazification of South Africa.'

By 1950 most of the craft unions had also left the TLC. Many of their members were now supervisors. The craft unions became racist and demanded that African unions be expelled from the TLC. Also, in the late 1940's the craft unions became increasingly anti-communist. At this time the international trade union movement split, with the pro-Western ICFTU breaking away from the WFTU. So when the Nationalist government introduced the Sup-

pression of Communism Bill the craft unions refused to defend fellow trade unionists, like Solly Sachs. Independent African unions and the registered industrial unions were faced with direct State repression. By 1956 some 56 trade unionists were banned.

The registered unions were greatly weakened by bannings. But they also had internal weaknesses. Many of their white members were also becoming supervisors, making them lose their militancy. Also the leadership made too many compromises with the more backward white workers. Even the GWU had separate branches for black and white workers. Also the leaders were only militant over economic issues, like wages and working conditions. They did not campaign for full political rights for black members. In the face of political pressure from the State and internal divisions, most registered industrial unions lost their militancy. They compromised with the racist craft unions and formed TUCSA in 1954. Solly Sachs, the banned leader of the Garment Workers Union, wrote from exile: 'if the conservative elements are prepared to fight the Nationalists even if only on immediate trade union issues, one National Trade Union Centre should be established, but always remember that unity of numbers without an urge to fight is useless and might even be dangerous.'

However, non-racial trade unionism did not die with the TLC. It was carried on by SACTU during the 1950's, and has been reborn in the democratic trade unions of today.



The secret of profit uncovered

ALTHOUGH the peasants and city workers had really won the revolutions that occurred throughout Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they soon found out that the new democracy was not meant to include them. They had no vote.

The landlords realised that it would be in their interests to support the capitalists. This was not only because the peasants were rebelling, but it would also increase their own power if there were no kings or queens. So the landlords and the capitalists became the new rulers with the parliaments firmly in their hands. Now there were no obstacles to using the armies and navies to defeat the rulers of other lands. Control of world trade quickly fell into the hands of the European capitalists.

Wage labour begins

But even this was not enough. The search for profit still continued. Capitalists began to ask themselves why couldn't they also control the production of some of the things that they traded? Couldn't they begin to make silk material?

But here another problem presented itself. If they were going to make lots of things then they needed factories and workers. Building factories was not such a problem, but where were they going to get the workers? True, there were some workers in the larger cities, but they were mostly skilled craftsmen, and in any case they were working for someone else. The capitalists needed new workers and lots of them.

The only place where there

were a lot of people was on the land. But these people had worked and lived on the land for centuries. Why would they move to work for someone else in a factory?

If things were going to be produced, then people would have to be moved off the land. Here the capitalists' control of the government became very important. By using force, the law, and trickery, people were moved off the land. This was not at all easy because people fought back.

But they lost the struggle. Slowly the land was taken away from them and it became the private property of the landlord capitalists.

Without land there is no food. Without food there is no life. The only way to get food then, was to buy it. But

the only way to get money was to work for somebody. The only people who had the money and factories to provide work were the capitalists. So people had no choice. The peasants, without any land, turned to the factories to become wage labourers. Work meant wages, wages meant money and money meant food, shelter and life itself.

The secret of profit uncovered

But as the capitalists employed wage labourers so they unlocked the door to great new sources of profit. This lay in the human energy of people. Human beings have a great ability. With their hands and their minds and working together with others, they can produce more than they need to keep themselves alive. This is why we said peasants were able

to produce a surplus over and above their needs.

This surplus and this ability was not new. But the capitalists had captured it themselves. Workers had no choice but to work for the capitalist because the land and the factories had become the private property of the capitalists. In exchange for his work, the capitalists paid the worker a wage to keep that person alive. But in a day's work the worker could produce more than was needed to keep one individual alive. The surplus had been captured and was now owned by the capitalist. The surplus had become the profit of the capitalist.

Next issue: The capitalists realise that if they introduce wage labour in the lands they traded with (like Southern Africa) then they could make bigger profits.



Mi Sidumo Michael Hlatshwayo

AMBITION I wanted to be a poet, control words, many words; that I may woo our multi-cultured South Africa into a single society. I wanted to be a historian, of a good deal of history; that I may harness our past group hostilities into a single South African history.

AGE/WORK After 34 years of hunger suffering, struggle, learning and hope, I am only a driver for a rubber company. Because the racist system designs that I with other millions of black children of misprivileged class be rendered powerless in making South Africa a pride of Africa, an envy of foreign powers and a wonder of the world.

EDUCATION When I left school at standard 7 I cried and cried. I cried because a natural instinct of judging told me that I was not equipped to shape my country into a land of plenty.

HOPE Yet I still have hope. I have hope because I with other millions of the working class are beginning to unite, to organise and to learn — about ourselves, about our power, about others, and about our land.

We workers are a worried lot!

Racist Racist Racist
Wake up!
Workers are a worried lot
we thought
we work
to fight injustices
— a common foe
we thought
we work
to fight unemployment
— a common foe
we thought
we work
to fight against starvation
— a common foe
we wanted

to conquer peace
— a common friend
we wanted
to win equality
— a common friend
Kodwa Hawu!
to you, our friends
are foes!
to you, our foes
are friends!
We workers are a worried
lot.

Racist Racist Oppressor
Wake up!

Let us see
West in West
and East in East
let us wave-off
mass dismissals
let us wave-off
mass unemployment
we can all be Neil Aggetts
we can all be Helen
Josephs
we can all be Neil
Alcocks
— disciples of justice
Yes, in Africa
let us be Africans
fear is a fallacy
now
let us tread on your un-
touchable sacred ground
to be forged by FOSATU
to be saluted by
CCAWUSA
to struggle in CUSA
what a march


of people's congresses
to come!
together we would
stave-off Star Wars
together we would
build empires without
bombs
together we would
put power in maize fields
not missiles
together we would
give respect to God and not
to dollars
oh, even the soil
shall sing praise hymns

Racist Racist Racist
Wake up!


We can discover
the secrets of Africa
we can discover
the splendour of Africa

we can discover
the pride of Africa
covered by sand dunes
of history
covered by sand dunes
of exploitation
covered by sand dunes
of colonialism
And Maye!
Africa
the Eden of Nations
the pillar of the universe
shall now
lead the world
and deliver the world
from its hunger
from poverty
— of minerals
— of morals
— and of love
Workers are a worried lot

Racist Wake Up!



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