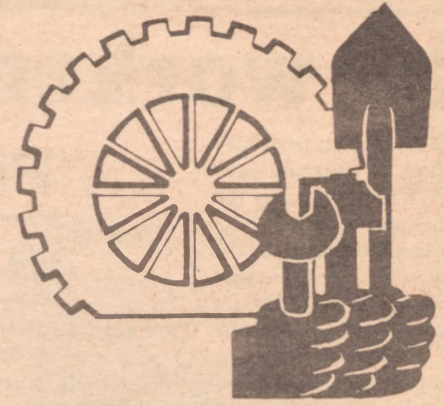


FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



May 1982



WORKERS stream through the gates of the Wattville Stadium on their way to MAWU's annual general meeting.

Thousands attend MAWU meeting

ABOUT 4 000 members of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) attended the union's annual general meeting held in Wattville stadium on May Day, Saturday May 1.

Representatives and members of other FOSATU unions as well as non-FOSATU unions were also present.

Busloads of workers came in from Brits, Northern and Southern Natal, and smaller delegations came from Witbank and many other centres.

The meetings was addressed by MAWU office bearers and speakers from all other unions affiliated to FOSATU.

GROWTH

Central themes in all the MAWU speeches and reports were the union's rapid growth last year and the need to strengthen the organisation in newly organised factories.

Transvaal secretary Rodney Nwamba reported that MAWU membership in the area had increased from 11 000 to 26 000 and eighty factories

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Unions meet to discuss No major obstacles, say delegates unity

DELEGATES from twelve unions and union co-ordinating bodies from all over South Africa met in Johannesburg at the end of last month to continue discussions on greater unity between democratic worker organisations.

The meeting was a sequel to the historic summit meeting held in Cape Town last year when the entire independent union movement came together to discuss mutual problems and challenges, and took joint decisions on a number of issues.

Unions and co-ordinating bodies represented at last month's meeting were FOSATU, the Food and Canning Workers' Union and African Food and Canning Workers' Union; the General Workers' Union; the Motor Assemblers' and Component Workers' Union of SA and the General Workers' Union of SA; the Cape Town Municipal Workers' Association; the SA Allied Workers' Union; the National Federation of Workers; the Orange-Vaal General Workers' Union; the General and Allied Workers' Union and the Black Municipality Workers' Union.

The Council of Unions of South Africa and the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union sent apologies.

DELEGATION

FOSATU was represented by Chris Dlamini, national president, Andrew Zulu, vice-president, Joe Foster, general secretary, Fred Sauls, Eastern Province region, Joe Gomomo, Eastern Province region, Alec Erwin, Natal region, Dusty Ngwane, Transvaal re-

gional chairman and Nimrod Luti, Transvaal region.

Before the meeting there was widespread speculation in the press that the meeting would be tense and could even break down, mainly because of FOSATU's widely-publicised stance on unity taken at its second national congress. But these predictions were proved wrong.

MAC WUSA

The delegation from MacWusa walked out as they said they refused to participate any further in meetings with

included registered unions or unions on industrial councils.

But all other unions present felt that there were no major obstacles in the way of further unity discussions.

According to views expressed at the meeting the only major potential obstacle was the lack of worker control and democracy within certain unions.

As long as workers were taking the decisions within their unions, it was felt that all unions could work with one another and agree to disagree if they could not find unanimity on certain

issues.

DEMOCRACY

Important discussions were held on the principles on which unity should be based. Most participants felt that unity should not be expedient but should be based on strong and entrenched principles.

Among those discussed were worker control, democracy within unions, non-racialism, community involvement, political involvement, industrial unions, and the ability to remain independent within a federation and disagree with

other member unions.

SUMMIT

The meeting ended after fruitful and constructive discussions and adopted a resolution whereby a smaller meeting is to be held in Port Elizabeth within two months, where documents will be discussed and circulated.

This is to provide a basis for a further summit meeting later this year. Meanwhile, the solidarity committees set up after the Cape Town summit last year will continue to meet.

FOSATU's stance spelled out

FOSATU's demand for "disciplined unity" was a major topic of discussion at the recent unity meeting in Johannesburg.

At the meeting, a delegate explained FOSATU's policy stance on the issue as follows:

"By disciplined unity we mean unity in an organisation in which member unions can see how decisions are taken and mandates are given. We do not believe that any federation should dictate to member unions.

"We also believe there should be room for disagreement between unions in any such federation. However, for a federation to work it must be based on clear principles which every member

union should accept.

"If they do not accept these, they should not be in the federation," he said.

WORKER CONTROL

FOSATU believed that these principles should include democratic decision-making and worker control over unions; non-racialism; involvement in community and political affairs, and industrial unionism.

Also, where these principles were entrenched in federation decisions they should be binding on all affiliates.

The spokesman added: "We also believe that the federation should have clear structures so that decision-making can be democratic and disciplined. Decisions must be taken by

representatives who have the mandate and constitutional authority to do so."

RESOLUTION

FOSATU's stance on unity follows a policy resolution adopted at its second national congress held earlier last month.

Congress reaffirmed FOSATU's commitment to building a united working class movement and to unite with other non-racial trade unions.

It also spelled out a detailed programme for working towards unity—and said it was willing to dissolve FOSATU if this would help to achieve unity.

However, congress made it clear that FOSATU would not accept any form of unity and that a united movement

would have to be disciplined, non-racial and democratic.

PROGRAMME

The programme for working towards unity is as follows:

*FOSATU will seek out worker organisations which broadly agree with its policies.

*It will move closer to them by discussing FOSATU's policies and positions with them.

*FOSATU will then begin to discuss with them how disciplined unity should be achieved.

*It will draft a constitution for a new body together with these organisations.

*It will then plan to merge existing unions with others and form joint organisations.

Rely workers win damages from Minister

THIRTY-THREE workers from Rely Precision Castings in Boksburg have been paid R9 575 in damages by the Minister of Police after being assaulted by Boksburg police two years ago.

The outcome of the workers' court action is likely to have an important effect on the way workers are treated by the police.

In fact, union spokesmen say the treatment of workers by police during the recent East Rand strike wave has already changed markedly.

BATONS

The workers sued the Minister for damages after policemen assaulted them with truncheons and batons at the Boksburg police station following a

'Police have been taught a lesson'

strike at the plant in May 1980.

The case was heard in the Boksburg Magistrate's court in January and March this year.

The Minister initially defended the case and lawyers for the defence tried to suggest that the workers had suffered their injuries by falling over in the van which took them to the police station.

WITHDREW

Workers denied this and the defence

withdrew after 14 workers testified about how they had been assaulted.

The parties agreed on the amount of damages to be paid to the workers, and the settlement was made an order of the court.

Unlike an out of court settlement, this means in effect that the Minister has admitted that the police assaulted the workers.

The money was handed over to the

workers at a ceremony at the FOSATU offices in Benoni last month. Most workers received R215, while the worker who had been worst injured was paid R750.

After the ceremony a video film was shown of the play *Ilanga*, which the Rely workers had produced together with the Junction Avenues Theatre Group.

The play depicted the experience of the Rely workers at the factory and during the strike.

LESSON

After the film, workers and organisers discussed the lessons of the strike. Rodney Nwamba, Transvaal secretary of MAWU, pointed out that the police had been taught a lesson as damages

paid out in this way could be recovered from the pay of the policemen involved in the assault.

The strike had also emphasised that contract workers could not simply be thrown away like rubbish, he said.

When the company fired the workers the Administration Board insisted that it should employ local workers.

But these workers did not like working in a foundry and left. The company was therefore forced to re-employ many of the sacked workers, he said.

David Sibabe, MAWU general secretary, said the determination and unity of the Rely workers had been an inspiration to all metal workers on the East Rand.

Metal unrest on East Rand:

Industrial Council exposed

SEVERE unrest has continued in the metal industry with thousands of workers on the East Rand striking for better wages.

The unrest has been related to the annual wage negotiations on the steel and engineering industrial council and worker leaders say the events of the past few months have once again exposed the complete inadequacy of the council.

The Metal and Allied Workers' Union to which many of the workers belong, has refused to join the council because it believes the council cannot deal adequately with worker demands in its present form.

On the other hand, the employers' federation, Seifsa, has refused to negotiate with unions outside the council.

WARNING

In March this year, David Sibabe, general secretary of MAWU, warned employers that they were "sitting on the lid of a volcano".

During 1981, he said, employers were making record profits but workers were not receiving increases in wages to compensate for the rapid rise in prices.

To make matters worse, he added, there had been no planting in the rural areas in December due to lack of rain, so that the families of the many contract workers employed in the metal industry were fully dependent on their wages.

Employers took no notice, saying they would only negotiate on the industrial council. When the negotiations started, employers offered a 25 cents an hour increase for all grades - far below FOSATU's R2 an hour living wage standard.

DELAY

The situation worsened further when the mainly white artisan unions on the council rejected the offer and declared a dispute, thereby delaying wage increases still further.

Workers responded by taking the situation into their own hands. At least ten wage strikes had already taken place on the East Rand before the council negotiations began.

Now, thousands of workers decided they could not wait any longer and downed tools at Haggie Rand, National Bolts, Screentex, Frys Metals, Defy and Scaw Metals.

At several of these factories management either gave or agreed to negotiate increases and workers returned to work.

ANGLO AMERICAN

At Scaw Metals, which is owned by Anglo American, management refused to give any increase at all. Workers did not even put forward the R2 an hour living wage demand but only asked for an immediate 10 cents an hour increase which could be taken off the industrial council increase when that was given.

Scaw management refused, saying this would "pre-empt" the council negotiations.

Shop stewards and union representa-

tives were amazed that a management with a "liberal" image like Anglo American could refuse a 10 cents increase while they had already offered more than that on the council.

Moses Mayekiso said: "Companies have no trouble awarding unilateral wage increases in individual factories when they deadlock with our unions.

"But when unions who don't even represent our workers deadlock the council negotiations, they refuse to do the same. This is bound to reinforce all our members' suspicions of the council."

DISMISSED

Despite prolonged negotiations, Scaw management refused to budge and dismissed the 2 800 workers on strike - which included most black clerical staff. Many contract workers returned home.

A week later about half had returned, but many have yet to come back despite Scaw's undertaking to re-employ.

Rodney Mwamba, MAWU branch secretary in the Transvaal, has said: "It is difficult to understand what 'pre-empting' negotiations means in this situation.

"It is hard to believe that any management could consider refusing the small increase worth all the loss and human suffering this has caused."

AGREEMENT

Unions and employers on the council finally reached agreement on pay increases late this month. Skilled workers will get increases of up to 40 cents an hour but unskilled workers increases from 30 cents an hour.

The new minimum rate will be R1,43 an hour, which falls far short of the FOSATU living wage demand which was already formulated last year.

One black union on the council has refused to accept the agreement and will ask its members whether they want it to withdraw from the council.

DIRTY WORD

"The metal industrial council is already a dirty word among workers," a worker leader has said.

"Now, they have been shown even more clearly how ridiculously inadequate the council is."

Workers oppose new tactic

IN a disturbing new trend, several managements on the East Rand attempted to replace striking African workers with "coloureds" during the recent strike wave in the area.

Companies which tried to break strikes in this way included Flexor, Hawker Siddeley and National Spring.

PLEDGE

Workers in affected factories have pledged to oppose this tactic, which

seems aimed at creating divisions among workers and weakening their organisation.

The Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) and FOSATU are now so strong in the Wadeville area that managements have found it very difficult to recruit "scab" labour to break strikes.

At Metal and Chemical Industries, for example, the company attempted to

build a strong leadership with clear political understanding. Without clear leadership we shall be blamed by our grandchildren for not directing the working class movement.

"We need to consolidate our organisation and have a stable membership so that we can build a disciplined unity inside MAWU based on FOSATU's principles.

"Leadership, consolidation and dis-

ciplined unity should be our motto for the next year," he said.

WORKER UNITY

He added: "May 1 is a secret date on the calendar of the working class. It is the day that represents workers' struggle, workers' hope and workers' unity.

"We celebrate May 1 in the sombre knowledge that workers and their unions are everywhere under pressure."



A group of workers with a banner at MAWU's annual general meeting held in the Wattville Stadium on May Day.

'MAWU must build leadership'

(Continued from p. 1)

had been organised.

Because of this expansion and the recent wave of strikes, organisers were often too busy to train shop stewards who in some cases were left to face management on their own.

Consolidation was essential if MAWU's members were to be adequately served, he said.

In his branch report for Southern Natal, Jeff Schreiner also welcomed the great progress made last year but said this year was likely to be a much more difficult one for workers.

TOUGHER

Bosses were becoming more experienced and tougher in dealing with unions. Also the economy was less active than before, and retrenchments and attacks on unions could be expected to increase.

June-Rose Nala from Southern Natal described the great steps forward taken in the area. When MAWU had started organising, she said, workers were getting 35 cents an hour.

Now, wages had been forced up and about 10 000 workers were organised in FOSATU unions.

However, she added that much work remained to be done as complete agreements had still not been signed in many factories.

FUTURE TASK

MAWU general secretary, David Sibabe, examined the union's task in the future.

"Our main duty now," he said, "is to



DAVID Sibabe addressing the meeting... "workers and unions are everywhere under pressure".

During the strike at National Spring the Katlehong shop stewards' council decided to use its community contacts to prevent scabs from taking the striking workers' jobs.

This was so successful that the company started recruiting "coloured" workers - who were not familiar with MAWU or FOSATU - a week later.

Striking workers then realised they would have to return. However, they are determined not to fall into the management trap of dividing workers by race, and are starting a recruitment campaign among the "coloured" workers that have been employed.

recruit scab labour from the pass office on the morning of the strike.

RAN AWAY

These workers were not told they were being brought in to break the strike. When the truckload of new recruits arrived and saw the striking workers outside the factory, they all jumped out and ran away.

The company then began negotiating with MAWU.

Unrest in Mandini:

Workers spell out their grievances

RIOT police used tear gas, dogs and batons to disperse about 3 000 workers who went on strike in the Mandini area at the end of March.

The unrest ended after a meeting at which representatives of many workers in the area outlined their demands, and negotiations with numerous employers and the local administration board were put into motion to resolve their grievances.

About 1 000 striking workers were from the SAPPI factory in Mandini and about 2 000 more were from factories in the neighbouring KwaZulu industrial area Isithebe.

Most workers live in the township Sundumbili, between Mandini and Isithebe.

BOYCOTT

Before the strike, workers at SAPPI had been boycotting canteen food for about ten days. They said the food was appalling and wanted to be paid out in cash instead.

One worker who broke the boycott was allegedly dragged out of the compound by three other workers and assaulted. Two of them, Theminkosi Mgwaba and Mbongeni Zulu, were later arrested.

SAPPI workers were furious about this. They felt management had called in the police and demanded that the company should have them released – especially since the alleged victim had declined to lay charges of assault.

The police would not release the men and SAPPI management left the whole matter in their hands.

FURIOUS

However, other residents of Sundumbili were also furious about the arrest. Both men were members of a vigilante group which was set up last year to curb the high crime rate in the township – which the police seemed unable to do.

For six months, the group had kept the peace and the crime rate had dropped drastically. The group enjoys tremendous support.

Therefore, when 1 000 SAPPI workers stayed away from work in protests against the arrests, other residents of Sundumbili, including workers at Isithebe and domestic servants in the areas, also stayed away.

TEAR GAS

The strike led to violence as riot police dispersed strikers with tear gas and chased them into the township where they used dogs, batons and arrested people. In response, people threw stones at the police but were forced to disperse.

The Paper, Wood and Allied Workers' Union, to which most workers at SAPPI belong, tried to organise bail for the arrested men, but both management and the police were unco-operative.

The police said they were looking for a third man, Bhakifa Mabaso, and would not release the other two until he had been arrested. Bhakifa then gave himself up to help the release of the other two.

RELEASED

The three men finally appeared in court on March 30, their case was remanded and they were released. The police then made a great show of giving the men a lift back to Sundumbili and presenting them to the people, who welcomed them back.

Then came the question of workers returning to work. The police would not allow any meetings and even SAPPI management refused to ask the police to allow meetings – despite the fact that the union organiser pointed out that workers could only decide democratically to go back at a general meeting.

Eventually the mayor of Sundumbili, Mr Caleka, called a meeting of shop stewards from SAPPI, representatives from the Isithebe factories and the domestic workers, union officials and one of his councillors.

GRIEVANCES

The following grievances were outlined:

- SAPPI workers wanted to resolve the dispute over bad canteen food
- Isithebe workers – who are very badly paid – demanded a minimum wage of R2,50 an hour, an increase of more than R2 an hour for most
- domestic workers demanded a minimum wage of R60 per month.

SAPPI management agreed to take back striking workers without victimisation provided they came back the next day. Mr Caleka met with Isithebe employers and worker representatives and promised to speak to the Port Natal Administration Board about the demands of the domestic servants.

REPORT BACK

Shop stewards and other representatives then reported back to strikers. All workers agreed to return since their arrested brothers had been released and to continue negotiating about their grievances once they were back at work.

Workers were only victimised at one factory in Isithebe, which was unfortunately an unorganised factory.



WORKERS at the KwaZulu Shoe Company during their recent strike over union recognition.

KwaZulu's man fails to settle dispute

THE struggle for union recognition at the Loskop subsidiary of the giant Canadian-based Bata Shoe Company has taken a new turn.

Workers at the subsidiary, the KwaZulu Shoe Company, struck for over a month on this issue but decided to return to work at a strike meeting held last month.

Their decision came after Mr Khanyile, appointed by the KwaZulu government to mediate in the dispute, failed completely to do so.

FRUSTRATION

Bitter frustration and disappointment with Mr Khanyile reached a climax

when it became known that he had been to the factory secretly and appointed his own committee among strikebreakers.

Mr Khanyile has claimed to have "mediated" between that committee and the company and thereby fully satisfied himself that the workers' claims were unfounded, their grievances false and the union completely unrepresentative.

Workers resolved that the union should write a formal letter to the KwaZulu Minister who appointed Mr Khanyile for clarity as to whether the government is satisfied that he properly represented the intentions of the KwaZulu Executive.

And if so, whether they are satisfied that the company is complying with their labour policy.

COMPLAINT

Workers further resolved that the union pursue their demand for recognition and wage grievances internationally.

Accordingly, an official complaint will be lodged with the ILO in connection with the company's anti-union practices and its policy of paying wages approximately 20 percent of that recommended by all international bodies concerned, including the Canadian Government and the ILO itself.

Major new role for shop stewards' councils

SHOP stewards' councils are playing an increasingly important role within FOSATU. In many areas, they are taking the lead in organisational drives and are the main forums for discussing important policy issues.

They are likely to play an even more important role in future after FOSATU changed its constitution at its recent second national congress to give formal recognition to such councils.

Shop stewards' councils are active in Pietermaritzburg, Springs, Uitenhage, Richards' Bay, Katshehong and Elandsfontein.

In Richards' Bay, the council carried out most of the organisation in the area before branches of individual FOSATU unions were formed.

KATLEHONG

In Katshehong, the council was formed with the specific intention of pushing organisation in the Wadeville area.

According to Richard Ntuli, council chairman and a shop steward at Lite-master, there were only two FOSATU factories in the entire Wadeville area at the end of 1980.

Workers therefore decided at the beginning of 1981 to form a shop ste-

wards council which would plan organisational drives.

Initially, it met every month as well as when crises occurred. By the end of last year, shop stewards from 23 factories were attending council meetings, of which 13 were well organised. Over 7 000 workers were represented at the meetings.

Since the beginning of this year, the council has met every two weeks and a planning committee has met every week in between. Monthly educational meetings are also being planned.

Richard Ntuli has said: "We recommend this way of building up democracy and union strength to all other locals."

SPRINGS

In Springs, the council has become such an important part of FOSATU organisation that a set of rules and objectives has been drafted to guide its operations.

These include:

- *to counteract sectional union interests among workers and their representatives

- *to organise a recruitment campaign to organise all workers into FOSATU unions

- *to assist workers and unions in their struggle by solidarity actions, publicity and financial support

- *to forge links with community organisations to encourage solidarity between the community and the workers' struggle.

MARITZBURG

Pietermaritzburg has one of the longest standing councils within FOSATU. It has discussed all major policy issues in the area for some time and has been responsible for much of FOSATU's growth.

According to Joku Makatini, MAWU organiser in Maritzburg, it has been meeting less often than before because of the rapid growth of membership in the area, but the intention is that it should play a major role in consolidating organisation in the new factories.

Democractic and effective, says Northern Natal

THE shop stewards' council in Northern Natal is the main decision-making body for all FOSATU unions operating in the area.

The council consists of all shop stewards from all factories organised by five unions – Metal and Allied Workers' Union, Chemical Workers' Industrial Union, Sweet, Food and Allied Workers' Union, Transport and General Workers' Union and Paper, Wood and Allied Workers' Union.

SUB-COMMITTEES

There have never been many organisers in the area so the council took responsibility for developing the unions. Four sub-committees have been elected to perform certain functions.

They are an organising committee, an administration committee, an education committee and a planning committee.

The organising committee went round to new factories organising workers into the unions. If a particular union was not already active in the area it was invited to establish a branch in Northern Natal. This included PWAWU.

The administration committee had to organise people to do the administrative

work to time to plan the next council meeting.

GROWTH

As a result, FOSATU unions grew at a tremendous rate during the past two years, and the whole area suddenly became alive through the new presence of the unions.

The council could mobilise new members and help organise new factories – but it clearly couldn't take the place of organisers. They could not regularly attend negotiations – which are mostly during working hours – and could not drop everything to be on the scene during an emergency such as a strike.

ORGANISERS NEEDED

For these things, and for follow-up work, organisers become essential. The ideal situation would be to have organisers working closely together with the council and its committees.

The shop stewards' council is no longer the main organising force in the area because most of the unions now have organisers there. But it remains the work for the unions. Each committee

met every two weeks and met from time to time to plan the next council meeting. Instead of the regional councils which have operated in other FOSATU regions up to now.

It is a bigger body than the councils have been because it consists of all shop stewards and is therefore also more democratic.

CONGRESS

At FOSATU's recent national congress, the constitution was amended to change regional councils into more democratic regional congresses.

In Northern Natal, the shop stewards' council has enabled the five FOSATU unions in the area to develop a very good working relationship. Organisers are responsible to the branch executive committees of their unions – but also to the council. Whenever possible, organisers from the different unions help each other to spread resources more evenly among the unions.

If problems crop up in any particular union, the council tries to resolve them.

Henkel backs down

IN a major victory for worker organisation, the Henkel company in Durban has capitulated and settled its dispute with the Chemical Workers' Industrial Union.

The settlement has come after the CWIU called a boycott of Henkel products which was backed by FOSATU at its second national congress held last month.

Soon afterwards, Henkel began negotiations with the union through a third party and eventually signed a legally binding agreement of settlement in which it has conceded all the union's demands.

REINSTATEMENT

The settlement provides for the full reinstatement of Henkel workers who had gone on strike in March this year without loss of long-service benefits.

These workers will be returned to their original positions, or where this is not possible, to equivalent positions at their previous wages.

Workers returned to work in two groups on May 3 and May 10.

Henkel also agreed to:

- *a secret ballot carried out jointly by the company and the union so that shift workers can decide on their hours of work. The original dispute was triggered off when the company tried to force

workers to accept either longer hours of work or less pay.

- *Accept the union's disciplinary procedure.

AGREEMENT

- *Negotiate in good faith a full agreement with the union according to a set timetable, and to finish negotiations by the end of this month.

- *Accept a retrenchment procedure by which workers will be dismissed in the following order: temporary employees (i.e. scabs); volunteers; and then according to the principle of first in, last out (Lifo).

Those retrenched will receive three months' notice, retrenchment pay of one and a half weeks' wages for every year of service, and four mornings off to find employment elsewhere.

Also, disputes over "key positions" in the company which are not liable for retrenchment will now go to arbitration.

VICTORY

Chris Dlamini, national president of FOSATU, has said the settlement is a major victory for both the CWIU and FOSATU.

"The union has shown its organisation and discipline and FOSATU has shown its strength.

"Perhaps employers will now realise that they must negotiate in good faith with FOSATU unions," he said.

Victory for worker organisation



DELEGATES at FOSATU's recent national congress with a Henkel boycott banner.

NAAWU takes historic step

First national wage demand

IN a historic step, the National Automobile and Allied Workers' Union (NAAWU) has decided to formulate a national wage demand every year and to nominate a national negotiating team to submit it to employers throughout the country.

FIRST EVER

NAAWU has been able to take this step as it has become the first union in FOSATU and probably in South Africa which can claim to be a truly national industrial union.

NAAWU now has 40 percent membership of all workers in the automobile manufacturing industry, and no other union in any major industry in South Africa has been able to claim a membership as large as this.

The union has representation in every motor assembly plant in the country and is well on the way to achieve this in the tyre and motor components industries as well.

NAAWU's decision - a landmark in South African labour history - was taken at its last national executive committee meeting held in March.

The meeting decided that this year's national minimum wage demand will be R3,50 an hour. This will be submitted to every factory where the union is represented for negotiation.

Explaining the background to this demand, NEC member John Gomomo has said:

"Before, we were demanding a living wage of R2 an hour. Now, we want to give workers a share in the fat of our land."

JOB GRADES

NAAWU will also demand that job grades be reduced from eight to three. The new proposed grades will just be for skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Roy Msiza, chairman of Sigma's shop-stewards' committee, explained that the large number of grades now in use were merely a tool used by management to divide workers against one another.

The wage differences between the grades amounted in many cases to one or two cents and workers often did the same work.

The union had therefore decided that the work done in the factory could easily

be divided up into three grades only, he said.



NEC member John Gomomo ... "We want R3,50 an hour".

SA Fabrics taken to industrial court

THE National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW) is taking SA Fabrics of Rosburgh to the industrial court over some of the harshest retrenchments executed by any textile employer this year.

When the company retrenched 60 workers, it gave the union 36 hours notice of the dismissals; selected workers for retrenchment without taking length of service into account; and introduced overtime for remaining workers at the same time.

Some of the dismissed workers had worked for the company for more than twenty years.

The union will ask the industrial court to rule that the company has committed an unfair labour practice.

ORDER SOUGHT

It will ask the court to order:

- *that all retrenched workers should be reinstated.

- *that the company should not retrench workers without giving the union 30 days notice, and allow it a reasonable opportunity to negotiate a fair procedure for retrenchments which may be necessary.

SA Fabrics is a subsidiary of a British company and the union also wants to lodge an official complaint with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) over the retrenchments.

Commenting on the retrenchments, the union's general secretary, Obed Zuma has said: "They know damn well

they couldn't do it in Britain. Why do it here?"

ILLEGAL

In Britain, retrenchments such as those executed by SA Fabrics would not only be unfair but also illegal, labour-experts say. In terms of codes of conduct for multi-nationals operating in South Africa, all parties to the ILO have agreed that subsidiaries will operate their factories here in accordance with internationally accepted standards.

This will be the first time that the industrial court will have to state its position on retrenchments and it remains to be seen whether it will impose the same standards in South Africa as are commonplace overseas.

Union attends world auto congress

FOUR delegates from the National Automobile and Allied Workers' Union (NAAWU) attended the eighth IMF world automobile workers' congress held in Tokyo, Japan, at the end of April.

The delegates, Roy Msiza (Sigma), Natie Gantana (Leyland), Wilson Jonas (Ford) and Les Kettleidas (Eastern Province regional secretary) were among 143 delegates representing 4 million workers in 26 countries around the world.

EXPLOITATION

The auto workers' congress first met in 1966 when it became clear to unions that the motor corporations were increasingly operating on a global scale. Workers were now confronting motor companies whose headquarters were in another country and which had the ability to switch investment and produc-

tion to areas where exploitation and profits were high.

At a stroke of a pen, hundreds of thousands of workers could find themselves jobless as a result of a multinational company's decision to move production from a high-paying country like Britain to a low paying one like Brazil.

CRISIS

The eighth auto congress met against a background of crisis in the motor industry. As the official statement released after the congress said:

"With one or two exceptions, not a single delegation to this conference looks forward to more jobs in the industry." All predict less work.

The congress laid the blame for this on the shoulders of the auto companies and governments, which have looked

towards increased profits and production at the expense of the workers and the community at large.

RESOLUTIONS

Major resolutions were:

- *to oust "right-wing, monetarist, anti-labour governments" and replace them with authorities placing the interests of workers first.

- *to standardise wages and other labour costs in the motor producing countries. "Higher wages and better working conditions do not mean fewer jobs but more productive jobs," congress said.

- *to equalise the work week and work year by reducing working time, eliminating overtime and increasing vacations and holidays.

- *to call for harmonized standards of job security. Noting that job security is

greatest and employment fluctuation smallest where workers and unions have most say in management, congress also voted to press for an active voice in company decision-making procedures.

SOLIDARITY

Commenting on the congress, Roy Msiza, NAAWU chairman at Sigma, said: "The congress was important in showing how important international solidarity between workers is.

"Workers in all countries face the same problems, and increasingly with the development of the multi-nationals, the same employers.

"It also became clear to us that Japanese workers were as hard pressed and exploited as any other car worker and that employers should not hold up the example of the happy and productive Japanese worker to us in South Africa."

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