

Printed and Published by:  
Federation of South African Trade Unions  
125 Gale Street, Durban, Natal 4001.

6th Edition  
August 1980



# FOSATU WORKER NEWS



## UITENHAGE STRIKES — VICTORY FOR A LIVING WAGE



The 3 week long Volkswagen strike and the wage settlement reached earlier this month mark a great break through for workers. The settlement marks the end of minimum wage negotiation and a hope for real collective bargaining in the future.

The Volkswagen strike started on Monday 16th June after the Uitenhage magistrate unwisely banned the report back meeting to have been held on 15th June. On the Monday the 3500 Volkswagen workers came out on strike followed on Tuesday by SKF workers. By Friday 20th the strike had affected about 12 factories and involved probably about 10 000 workers. By Wednesday 25th June nearly all workers had returned to work except Volkswagen.

Workers in other factories made similar wage demands in sympathy with the motor workers demand and widespread wage negotiations in Port Elizabeth/Uitenhage are continuing at present.

The Unions reached an agreement with the Companies that was accepted by workers. This gave a minimum of R1,45 per hour plus a service attendance allowance. There were also across the board increases for all workers and increases in the minimum reaching R1,60 in January 1981, R1,80 in July 1981 and R2,00 in January 1982.

These increases are the largest achieved by the Union but more important the companies accepted that a reasonable living wage must be paid. They also agreed that there would be an independent enquiry into what is a reasonable wage.

FOSATU has welcomed this as a great victory for all workers and a guide to future negotiations. FOSATU said that a reasonable wage:



VW Factory at Uitenhage

- must cover workers actual needs not the minimum required to keep him alive.
- must provide for a reasonable standard of living and not a continual struggle with poverty.
- must provide a secure income which means that a worker must also have job security; there should be training, service allowances, redundancy pay and benefits such as pension and medical schemes.
- must be more equitable compared to company profits.

## LEATHER WORKERS REGAIN CONTROL

For almost two decades the National Union of Leather Workers (NULW) dominated the administration of benefit funds established for leather workers in Pietermaritzburg. Recently however workers themselves have reclaimed control of the funds. Last month the NULW called a meeting to try and stem the tide of discontent against their administration. However, General Secretary Jordaan was refused a hear-

ing by angry workers. The meeting was first postponed for a week and then quietly dropped.

An encouraging development in the workers attack on the alleged corruption in the fund's administration has been the non-racial organisation of their effort.

The NULW bureaucracy have supposedly been investigating these allegations for

(cont. on page 3)

## FOSATU GRANTED NON-RACIAL — EXEMPTIONS.

Last month the State hastily granted non-racial exemptions to 6 FOSATU affiliates shortly after prohibiting FOSATU from raising funds. As a result the full implications of the exemptions were not dealt with in the national press.

In their applications the Unions stated their position on the non-racial stand boldly and clearly. The Minister was told that at no time in their history had a member ever challenged the desirability of their non-racial constitutions. Furthermore, the unions stated that limiting their membership to Black workers "would lead to a racial polarisation of relationships between employees rather than build a spirit of Trade Unionism and would be divisive and crippling to the ability of employees to bargain collectively with their employers."

FOSATU has been guardedly pro-registration in the crucial debate over a strategy for the non-racial union movement. Its view was that the State would have to concede and allow completely non-racial unions to regis-

ter if it was challenged directly on the issue.

FOSATU unions are the only ones who have taken a clear stand on non-racial registration - no separate branches, no racially separate meetings, no separate executives. As the applications said "such practices would be abhorrent to the entire membership of the applicant union."

The FOSATU exemption has important implications for the trade union world.

Firstly it exposes the racism and paternalism in those unions whose applications stopped short of non-racism by limiting membership racially or by retaining racial segregation in their branches and executives.

Secondly it exposes the lack of political insight and inflexibility of those who saw application for registration as necessarily abandoning central trade union principles.

It now remains to be seen whether the Registrar tries to slip racial definitions into the certificates of registration and if so what steps FOSATU will take to resist this.

## National Manpower Commission — The Presidents Council?

The composition of the National Manpower Commission a body which will advise the Minister of Manpower Utilisation on all matters affecting workers in South Africa, has been announced. The Minister it seems is not to have a single advisor with any known sympathy to the non-racial trade union movement. Not surprisingly the minister's confidence in the advice of employers and his own department has meant 12 members are direct representatives of employer interests and 14 are state representatives. A further 5 are conservative academics. The lone trade unionist voice is found in 7 representatives - 3 from TUCSA and the rest even further removed from the non-racial union movement.

"On looking at the composition of this commission one can only hope the Minister doesn't need advice too often" quips Alec Erwin General Secretary of FOSATU. "Anyway I don't think workers need be unduly concerned. Labour relations aren't determined by Manpower Commissioners whispering in the Minister's ear. They grow out of factory struggles and FOSATU is better represented on the factory floor."

### FOSATU BOOSTS



### NATIONAL ORGANISATION

Any good unionist knows that national unions are essential if worker organisation is going to be truly effective.

Realising this FOSATU stressed its policy of close cooperation so that affiliates could help each other establish other branches and become truly national unions.

The policy has been a major success for FOSATU. In July NUTW started its National Executive following the inauguration of the Eastern Province Branch in April and CWIU inaugurated its Transvaal Branch and will form a National Executive soon.

Similar initiatives are in progress with SFAWU and PWA-WU.

In 1974 the NUTW experienced the break-away of its Transvaal branch under the influence



of Lucy Mvubelo and the National Union of Clothing Workers. Says Obed Zuma newly elected Secretary "It was a bitter lesson teaching us that national unity can never be based on individuals, but needs a national organisation".

The Transvaal Branch of CWIU was inaugurated on July 5th at a large meeting held in FOSATU's Benoni office.

There was a spirit of excitement as Natal and Transvaal workers met and reported on their common problems and struggles.

Organisation is growing surprisingly rapid from the initial efforts of workers in Colgate and Reef Chemical.

The Chemical Industry is big and complex so the road to national organisation will



### Paper Union Strengthens

The Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union had a tough time as a new affiliate of FOSATU.



Their first problem was to dismiss an ineffective General Secretary.

However, the worker Executive responded magnificently to the crisis and have boosted income by a few hundred percent and initiated recognition approaches to major paper companies.

FOSATU is also assisting PWAU to organise in Port Elizabeth and the Western Cape and there are also prospects in Natal. With hard work and clear thinking the prospects of an effective national union are good.

be a long one but CWIU are on their way.

# BMW - UAW negotiations continue

BMW (SA) is a German owned assembly plant in Pretoria. UAW started organising there in 1978 and had 56% membership by mid '79. However efforts to meet management failed. On the 28th January 1980, the company agreed to give the Union stop-order deductions for members of the Union Benefit Fund. This was to start in the first week of March 1980.

### FURTHER NEGOTIATION

The Union was dissatisfied with the process of verifying requests for deductions. At a meeting between the union and management on the 24th April it was agreed that a union organiser would be present at such verification.

Progress has been achieved but workers remain wary of management's reaction to the union. Management stalled over a request for union officials to visit their own committee members on factory premises saying that the board of directors would not agree to this until the union was registered! In contrast to this was management's undertaking that no workers' position would be adversely affected by union membership or activities in lunch breaks or outside working hours.

Surprisingly the personnel manager has questioned the steering committee chairman about his involvement in union activities suggesting that since the chairman worked in the work-study department he should not be a union member as he is supposed to share ideas with management.

### THE IMMEDIATE TASKS AHEAD

The most important task is for the union to take over the company liaison committee. This has been changed by management to an employee council comprising 8 whites and 8 black workers with a rotating chairmanship. Management meets with this council only on its request. Recently the company has made concessions to workers through this council by raising overtime pay. The union has only 4 members on this council and so much organising has to be done before it succeeds in demands for full recognition.

Nelson Rakau - UAW.



## Recognition at Rennies

July 1980 saw the Transport and General Workers Union reaching a 3 point agreement with Rennies Bulk Terminal in Durban.

. Union officials will have access to company premises during lunch hours.

. Union Shopstewards and officials will hold monthly meetings with the company.

. The company will deduct union dues by stop order.

The agreement comes as a break through for the Union. "We've spent five years organising stevedores at Durban harbour and we've got 148 members of the 170 wor-

kers at Rennies" comments Connie Khumalo. "What workers want is a harbour wide agreement" she says, "and we won't rest until we make it all the way."

In the entire history of the development of Durban's harbour, unskilled and semi-skilled workers have never had a union recognised by employers and certainly harbour work has not had its first day under a Union agreement. But the tide is clearly turning as the TGWU commences negotiations with several other companies serving the harbour.

### LEATHER UNION - (cont. from page 1)

over a year without reporting any findings to date. A worker spokesman says that they are calling for an open investigation into the fund. The fund has up until now been open to workers of all races and to both members and non-members of NULW. However, following the worker campaign the NULW Executive apparently changed the constitution of the fund. The changes make NULW the permanent administrators of the fund and make only NULW members eligible for membership.

However, workers strongly deny that these changes were ever discussed with them yet despite this the NULW Branch Secretary appears to have informed the registrar of the changes.

The dispute between the NULW and leather workers, both Indian and African, also comes as a bitter blow to TUCSA's mixed union policy. The NULW is a leading TUCSA affiliate and it appears that their attempts to quietly push African workers into the tail end of their union by means of employer stop orders and without discussion is now back firing badly.

The events are likely to increase the worker suspi-

cion about many TUCSA unions that in practice they are controlled by union bureaucrats and not workers. Leather workers in Pietermaritzburg have watched as the NULW have changed their tune from saying that unions for African workers are illegal to saying "join NULW now or loose your benefits."

Now workers are reclaiming control of the benefit fund into which they have all paid for many years and as we reported in the last edition they have also formed their own truly non-racial Tanning, Footwear and Allied Workers Union.

As one worker summed-up events "You can't fool all us workers all of the time".

### HOW DO YOU RATE AS A UNION MEMBER?

1. What is your union's full name?
2. When and where was your union started?
3. How long is your shop steward's period of office?
4. Where does your union bank its money?
5. Who was Clements Kadalie?

See page 4 for your rating.

## Foundry Workers In Bitter Union Struggle

In May the entire workforce of 55 was fired and work ground to a standstill at Rely Precision Castings. The dispute was over the alleged unfair dismissal of a Metal and Allied Workers (MAWU) Shop Steward who was accused of going to the factory gate during working hours to tell his wife that he had to work overtime.

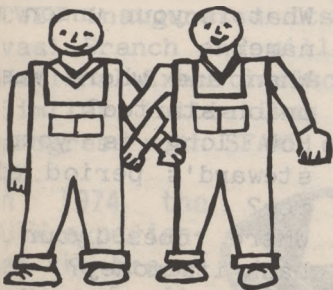
The incident followed a 14 month campaign by the union. The "won't talk" management called in the police to resolve matters by arresting workers. But they soon were obliged to re-employ some of the workers to restart the foundry. Nevertheless its hard line seems to have silenced angry workers for the moment.

The workers were charged with an illegal strike and they allege that they were assaulted by police after their arrest.

More than two months later the union is still battling to assist its members. It laid out several thousand rand in bail money, union members in other factories raised money for unemployed Rely workers and came forward with offers of accommodation for those expelled from hostels; several dismissed workers have been placed in employment in other in other union organised factories and union lawyers have moved both to defend workers on strike charges and to pursue the assault claims.

Their struggle clearly shows that unions of working men are harder than ever to break up as workers grow more and more conscious of their right and duty to organise themselves.

**Your union is as strong as your support**



**SUPPORT IT!**

## New Worker Regulations

After months of enquiry the Government has amended and supposedly relaxed the pass laws. It all sounds very progressive but in practice we wonder.

The first requirement is legal accommodation but as this is at a premium workers with urban rights have limited chance of employment outside the town they always lived in, notwithstanding the right of Section 10 1 (a) and (b) workers to move from one area to another.

The regulations ignore workers' families. If a worker gets employment and residence in an area other than his own, can his family accompany him? Previously this has not been the case unless they too have Section 10 rights.

Some of the 'red tape' has been removed in that workers do not have to register as workseekers or report to labour bureaux more than once. This is hardly a concession as for example, in Natal virtually all townships have been incorporated in the Homelands so nobody can acquire section 10 1 (a) or (b) rights and this concession only applies to such workers.

Should contract and migrant workers (who have no urban rights) gain employment they will be required to carry another "scrap" of paper legalising their presence in town.

Temporary Identification Certificates now cannot reflect employment contracts. Thus migrant workers are doubly open to the possibility of prosecution. Duplicate reference books often take 6 months to arrive and so in the meantime what proof has the worker that he is legally employed?

Employers should hand out certificates reflecting this but they cannot always be relied upon to do so as is often seen in their disregard of other regulations which are supposed to protect their employees.

Employers never go to jail; pass law offenders do.

The new system is to be divided between the departments of Co-operation and Development, Manpower Utilisation and the Administration Boards.

## Frame — Worker Leader Assassinated.



S. Cele (right) J. Gwala, M. Nzama

On Friday 11th July Samson Cele was shot dead by a masked gunman as he waited at a Clermont bus rank. Samson Cele was 28 years old with a wife and two young children. He had worked at the Frametex mill in New Germany since 1974. As a Shop Steward of 4 years standing he was one of the 3 worker leaders arrested as they left the negotiating table during the recent strike.

The newly formed National Executive of the NUTW has called for a thorough investigation into the murder in view of the surrounding circumstances. The Union has also expressed its sympathy and support for his family. Cele was due to appear with Gwala and Nzama in court on 15th July. Owing to his murder the case was postponed to Wednesday 16th July where the magistrate dismissed the charges because of the unreliability of the State's evidence.

The Court's decision should make it finally clear that the strike was caused by angry and frustrated workers and not agitators as the State and management would like to claim. Unfortunately Samson Cele was not present to enjoy this one small victory in our long struggle.

### UNION RATING

Score out of 5:

- 1 - Are you a management spy?
- 2 - You're a good parallel union member!
- 3 - It is time you started going to union meetings.
- 4 - We need you in the struggle.
- 5 - Hey! No cheating!

**Collection Number: AG3307**

**Collection Name: FOSATU WORKER NEWS, 1979-1985**

***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:* Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand

*Location:* Johannesburg

©2015

***LEGAL NOTICES:***

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document forms part of a collection held at the Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.