

WORKERS' UNITY

Organ of the South African Congress of Trade Unions

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Fight for independent unions!

African workers know that the government and the employers have always resisted their attempts to form trade unions. They have gone to great lengths to strangle the workers' movement. An example was the vicious police baton charges last year at Heinemann Electric, where workers were insisting on the recognition of their own union.

This brutality has such a long history that workers are quite prepared for a long struggle to achieve full trade union rights. This struggle must never slacken.

But is it possible that the government and the employers could soon decide to change their policy and agree to allow some African trade unions?



March 1976 at Heinemann Electric: police beat up workers demanding trade union recognition. Could the bosses change their tactics?

Fear among the bosses

The militant strike action of African workers after the Soweto massacres last year caused great fear among the factory owners, the bankers, the government — indeed the whole ruling class. They know that it is impossible to hold down the mass of the working people of South Africa for ever by means of the gun alone.

They can see the growing power of the working class. They know that even the shootings, beatings, arrests and tortures of the last nine months have failed to crush the determination of the oppressed people.

Now the employers and the government are looking about for some sort of outlet that can be provided for African workers' grievances — but an outlet that can be easily controlled.

The attempts to restrict African workers to the government's liaison and works committees have failed. Independent African unions have been springing up. But the last thing the rulers want is independent unions controlled by the African workers themselves! That is why 24 trade unionists were banned in November — an attempt to smother the movement for independent unions.

But what about the "parallel" unions that TUCSA (the Trade Union Council of SA) has been setting up for Africans? A "parallel union" is organised alongside an existing registered union and is controlled by it. So far government policy has been against even these dummy unions for Africans — but it is possible that, together with the employers' associations, the government may decide to give its approval to the recognition of them.

They must be rejected!

In case this happens, it is extremely important for all workers to know the truth about "parallel unions"; to understand why they are

being set up and why they must be totally rejected by African workers!

"Parallel unions" are not proper trade unions, helping to build up the power of the working class and free it from enslavement by the bosses. They are in fact a method which has been thought up to control the African workers, to suit the interests of privileged groups.

In another article we have reported some of the disgraceful facts about how "parallel unions" actually work. Here we want to look at the background to TUCSA's parallel union policy so that workers can see what the real purpose behind them is.

TUCSA's record

TUCSA's own policies about organising African workers have changed so often over the years as to make a person dizzy trying to keep track of them!

From 1954 (when it was formed) until 1962, TUCSA firmly closed its doors to African unions. In fact it was founded for the very purpose of keeping Africans out. Then,

- * in 1962 it decided to let African unions in;
- * in 1967 it forced Africans out;
- * in 1968 it decided again to keep African unions;
- * in 1969 it decided once again to drive them out;
- * in 1973 it decided to set up "parallel unions" for African workers. This (for how long?) is TUCSA's policy today.

These policy changes seem puzzling at first, but we can understand them if we realise who TUCSA represents.

The registered unions

TUCSA is one of the two big trade union

co-ordinating bodies in South Africa. Its members are registered unions under the Industrial Conciliation Act — unions which can negotiate about wages and working conditions with the bosses, to make agreements which the government will make binding. No African worker can, by law, be a member of a registered union.

Only about 15 per cent of South Africa's workers (even less if we count farm labourers) are organised into registered trade unions. Who are these 15 per cent?

They are the supervisors, clerical workers, civil servants, bank officials and artisans (workers skilled in a particular craft, like carpenters, fitters and turners, etc.). Also there are shop workers, service workers and some semi-skilled factory workers (usually machine operators). The machine operators who belong to registered unions are mainly to be found in factories producing things like leather and clothing, where Coloured and Indian workers, rather than Africans, have all along been employed.

Who belongs to TUCSA?

Most of the unions of white workers belong to the racist Confederation of Labour, which does not allow workers of other races to join. TUCSA is made up of some registered unions with white members, some with Coloured and Indian members, and some which are "mixed". These TUCSA unions are mainly of two types: on the one hand skilled workers' unions (like boilermakers, engineers, electricians, carpenters, etc.), and on the other hand the unions of the semi-skilled machine operators.

If we look closely at these two types of unions, we can see a clear pattern within TUCSA concerning the organisation of African workers.

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Parallel unions: where African workers are "treated like lepers" - see page 2

"Parallel" unions exposed!

"When is a trade union not a trade union? When is it a 'parallel union' for Africans?"

With these words the *Financial Mail* (19 November 1976) began its article on TUCSA's "parallel" unions. The *Financial Mail* is a journal of the big capitalists. Because it is written for the bosses and is hardly ever read by workers, it often feels free to tell a few bits of unvarnished truth about strikes, shocking wages and working conditions, victimisation and other labour matters — including things you never find in the popular newspapers!

In its article on "parallel unions" the *Financial Mail* gives facts which every worker should know. That is why we are repeating some of them here.

★ There are claims that "some unregistered unions on the Reef are being manipulated by the registered trade unions, or in fact exist only on paper."

★ There is suspicion amongst Africans "about the deduction of union 'dues' from pay packets." Leather workers, for example, say that "they have been paying union dues since the 1950s, but that no union existed until 1974."

★ Registered unions which are supposed to help the parallel unions "often practice some form of job reservation against African workers." Independent unionists also see parallel unions as TUCSA's attempt to push out the independent unions.

★ Mr. Scheepers, the TUCSA bureaucrat who "runs" at least two parallel unions, rejected complaints that there were no shop stewards or elected officials, and that members played no part. He blamed things on "Bantu

shop stewards" who "are too lazy to come in here, which happens often — but they're quickly here when their shop stewards' commission is paid out."

★ African workers complained that they seldom went into union offices because "we are treated like lepers there." Scheepers himself negotiates on behalf of the African unions at the Industrial Council. He is against training African workers to negotiate for themselves because "this could create racial friction."

★ When it was claimed that one of Scheepers' parallel unions did not exist, he replied: "The Union existed in 1962 and I haven't dissolved it." He could not name the union president. The president had "retired" and "I will have to get another one elected."

★ Most parallel unions "are run directly by White general secretaries of the registered unions."

★ Mrs. Anna Scheepers (who is also a United Party Senator) is accused of virtually overturning decisions by the (African) National Union of Clothing Workers if she does not like them. "She calls in the executive and lectures them like grade school children and then tells them to go back and reconsider. Usually they do..."

★ In the case of the "parallel" African Tobacco Workers' Union, the Secretary "is supposed to be a Nicholas Hlongwane." However, independent unionists believe that "Hlongwane is actually an office worker, employed by the registered union. They say they have invited him to meetings but are always told that he is busy making tea or



TUCSA bureaucrat Scheepers. He "runs" parallel unions.

fetching the post."

The *Financial Mail* thinks that "it is unlikely that African workers will go along with parallelism much longer." The parallel union members they interviewed all said they were eager to join a proper trade union. "But they are suspicious of 'unions' in which they have no say."

FOOTNOTE: In 1973, TUCSA told the British Trades Union Congress that it cost them R45 to recruit each African "member"! They should rather give the money to the workers — who could use it to build a truly powerful, truly independent trade union movement for themselves!

FIVE THOUSAND GATHER TO BURY NDZANGA

Despite the intense campaign of terror unleashed by the police in Soweto, more than five thousand mourners braved the threat of shootings when they gathered for the funeral of Lawrence Ndzanga, former Secretary of the Railway and Harbour Workers' Union and a member of the National Executive Committee of SACTU.

Comrade Ndzanga died in the notorious cells of the security police at John Vorster Square. He is one of the 19 political prisoners who are known to have died in detention since March 1976. It is commonly believed that he was tortured to death. As a speaker at his funeral said, "Although we are told that he collapsed, the circumstances under which he died raise doubts to those who can read between the lines as to what happened behind those windowless walls. Some of us have been in detention and we know what happens there."

Great courage

Lawrence Ndzanga was 52 years old and leaves four children. A dedicated trade unionist of long standing, he was banned in 1963 and forced to resign from trade union activities. He and his wife, Rita, have persistently shown great courage. In 1968 they were detained under the Terrorism Act and tortured. After more than fourteen months in solitary confinement they were unsuccessfully tried for "furthering the aims" of the African National Congress. Acquitted, they were banned again as soon as they were released.

Rita, herself detained yet again without trial by the security police, was refused permission to attend her husband's funeral. She is now facing charges under the Terrorism Act.

At the funeral Ndzanga was praised for his outstanding contribution to the liberation struggle of the black people. The crowd responded with freedom songs and raised clenched fists. "Leaders shall come and go, but



Lawrence and Rita Ndzanga

the people will always remain," the speaker said.

Never rest

SACTU mourns the death of this brave comrade. We have received a message of solidarity and condolence from the Secretariat of the World Federation of Trade Unions. We join them in extending to Rita Ndzanga and family our deep sympathy. To comrade Lawrence's fellow workers and to all trade unionists we say,

"Let us never rest in the struggle to free South Africa from oppression and exploitation. Let us boldly go forward in the spirit of courage and defiance set us by comrade Lawrence and the many other martyrs, for our victory is as certain as the rising of tomorrow's sun."

SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE

Preparations are progressing for the solidarity conference to be held in Southern Africa in support of the South African workers.

Help is coming and being sought from international trade unions and trade union centres in the socialist, capitalist, and non-aligned world.

SACTU: 22 YEARS OF STRUGGLE

Twenty-two years ago, on 5th March 1955, the South African Congress of Trade Unions was formed.

The old Trades and Labour Council had broken up in 1954, the majority of its member unions resolving to form an entirely new body which would exclude African trade unions from membership. For this purpose, TUCSA (the Trade Union Council of South Africa) was soon brought into being. Elsewhere in this paper we have set out some of the shameful history of TUCSA's policies towards African trade unions.

At the final conference of the Trades and Labour Council, fourteen unions (white, mixed and African) fought with all the resources at their command against this proposal to divide the labour movement. They stated their position in these words:

"Only a strong trade union movement can fulfil its task of defending and advancing the workers' interests. Only a united trade union movement can be strong. The interests of the African workers are in the long run no different from the interests of the Coloured, European and Indian workers."

"It is to the advantage of the employers and their government to divide the workers. Division is a policy directed by the bosses and not in the workers' interests."

"Events will convince the workers in this country as in other countries that their salvation lies in unity and it is our duty to bring the knowledge home to our fellow-workers."

"We are determined to carry on a struggle against the policy of racial discrimination and to work for the achievement of a single trade union organization embracing all sections of the working class."

These are the aims and principles for which SACTU has fought for twenty-two years. This struggle continues and will continue relentlessly.

WORKERS WITHOUT JOBS

Every worker in South Africa today is feeling the grim results of the economic crisis which the bosses' system has brought about. No jobs; endlessly rising prices.

Black workers suffer more severely than any others; they face the growing threat of unemployment every day. *Nearly two million are now out of work, and the number is rising by about 22,000 every month.*

The rulers have no answers

The government has admitted that it "just doesn't know where it stands" over the spreading unemployment crisis. Many factories are closing or going on to short-time. The employers (who are feeling very gloomy about their own future) can do little more than hope for recovery in the economies of the big capitalist countries to bring them some relief. In future issues we will discuss some of the reasons for the economic crisis in South Africa. We shall explain why workers will *never* be free of the threat of unemployment as long as the capitalist system remains.

Here we will give just a few of the facts about unemployment, to show how workers are made to bear the burden of the bosses' crisis.

Left to starve

The full extent of unemployment in South Africa is kept hidden from view. The pass laws are used to remove Africans without jobs from the urban areas and dump them to starve in the reserves.

Although unemployment insurance exists in South Africa, most African workers receive no benefit from it when they are out of work. The *Rand Daily Mail* reported recently that the Unemployment Insurance Fund "is paying out a tiny percentage of the people who should be

What future for them when 2 million are unemployed?



drawing from it — only 11,000 a month — while the urban jobless number is nearly 700,000."

Migrant workers in South Africa whom the law treats as "Transkeians" have now been excluded from the Unemployment Insurance Fund, as a result of the so-called "independence" of the Transkei.

Many workers are denied unemployment benefits because employers fail to make the proper contributions for them and do not provide them with the necessary UF 74 cards. Even when workers do receive benefits, these are only a small proportion of ordinary earnings and are paid for a maximum of 26 weeks. The wages of most African workers are barely at the breadline; they cannot possibly

survive on unemployment insurance payments.

Getting a "Springbok"

Drawing unemployment insurance is no easy matter. African workers have to go through a long and expensive process of job-seeking before they are able to get the "Springbok" — the clearance for UIF payments. Even then, the worker has to report to Bantu Affairs officials who again decide whether he or she qualifies for payments. Then the worker often has to go to another part of town for the pay-out.

Bantu Affairs officials send hundreds, if not thousands, of unemployed Africans to apply for jobs that either don't exist or which they are not able to do. Now the employers themselves are complaining about this, because they have to interview dozens of "unsuitable" workers and fill in the forms of the hundreds of men and women sent to fill "a handful of jobs".

Why do the Bantu Administration Boards do this? One employer says he has proof that the purpose is a "delaying tactic" to avoid paying out unemployment insurance to Africans. Many examples of this have been given. When one firm asked for a "security man", the Bantu Administration Board sent "a string of people" who were disabled, including one man who was partially blind. When the firm complained, the officials said: "Don't worry, just fill in their forms as 'unsuitable' and we don't have to pay them this week."

Another employer said: "I think they (the Bantu Boards) are sending out people to show they have no unemployed, just job seekers finding work."

Exploitation is intensified

Those workers who do have jobs are, of course, seriously threatened by the rising unemployment. They are afraid they will be next to lose their jobs. The employers and the government know how to use this fear to sow division among the workers, as was shown by the leaflets which they put out last year in an unsuccessful attempt to break the general strikes.

In these conditions the victimisation of militant workers and trade unionists is stepped up. Exploitation is intensified; wages are forced down.

The mass unemployment has provided a golden opportunity for employers to snap up "casual labour" for between R2 and R4 a day. Unemployed Africans in Johannesburg wait on the pavement at the labour offices in Albert Street from the early hours of each morning in

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WORLD LABOUR MOVEMENT IN ACTION AGAINST APARTHEID

In a week of action against apartheid by the world labour movement, workers in many countries showed their solidarity with the struggle of the workers in South Africa. The week, from 17th to 22nd January, was undertaken by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the World Federation of Trade Unions, the World Confederation of Labour and the Organization of African Trade Union Unity. Together these organizations represent a massive 200 million workers worldwide.

In Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Belgium and Holland, dock workers imposed bans on the handling of South African goods and ships.

In France postal workers introduced a ban on mail and 'phone calls to South Africa, while in Britain a similar ban was stopped by the courts (the case is being appealed by the postal workers' unions).

In Norway trade unionists have started a permanent ban on the importing of South African wine. In Italy the trade union centres successfully organised a three-day boycott of South African aircraft.

Messages of support

SACTU's offices have been flooded with telegrams, messages of solidarity and conference resolutions from workers' organisations throughout the world. Here we can mention only a few.

The Canadian Labour Congress representing more than two million workers announced that, as part of its contribution it would build a

massive fund "to be used to support black and coloured unions in their daily struggle against oppression." From the Hungarian trade union movement: "We extend fraternal solidarity to the workers of your country." From the Czechoslovakian Council of Trade Unions: "We have always felt and will always feel henceforth full solidarity with our brothers in South Africa."

Part of a world struggle

From Finland, the Helsinki Engineering and Shipbuilding Workers resolved: "By giving all our support and showing solidarity to the people of South Africa we are also supporting the struggle of the workers all over the world against the oppressors."

From Algeria, Egypt, Ghana and Libya came assurances of support. Dutch workers picketed the South African embassy in Amsterdam. Workers have been holding meetings in their factories and places of work to express solidarity with their South African brothers and sisters. In Britain, unions representing engineering workers, seamen, miners, tobacco workers, transport workers, civil servants and others all supported action against the South African regime.

In London John Gaetsewe, the General Secretary of SACTU, saluted the British and other unions for their action. "Whatever obstacles are put in your way, you are certainly giving an enormous boost to the morale and confidence of the South African workers' movement," he said.

African miners in S.A.

This is the second in a series of articles dealing with the conditions of workers in South Africa's major industries.

Mining was the first type of large-scale production in South Africa. For a hundred years, the sweat and blood of African miners have made it flourish. The wealth dug from the ground by workers was used to finance the building of the roads, railways, bridges, harbours and factories of our country.

Today there are over 640,000 African miners in South Africa. They work on gold, coal, diamond, copper, asbestos, chrome, platinum and other mines.

In 1974, they produced R4,000,000,000* worth of minerals. This was about 12 per cent of the value of everything produced in South Africa that year, and made up 60 per cent of the country's earnings through exports.

Ruthlessly exploited

Most African miners (about 400,000) work on the gold mines, which produce about 60 per cent of the world's gold. The gold mine owners have made enormous profits from the labour of the workers. In 1974, the working profits of the gold mines totalled R1,578,200,000.

These profits are the result of ruthlessly exploiting African mineworkers. The *migrant labour system* which lies at the root of apartheid, was developed to serve the interests of the mining capitalists. Today, it is the way African labour is controlled and exploited throughout South Africa.

Africans are forced to find jobs in the mines and the factories because of the extreme poverty in the rural areas. The pass laws prevent these workers from ever settling in the industrial areas and finding permanent jobs. They are taken under "contract" to the mines and factories. As soon as their period of employment is over, they are dumped back into the over-crowded and poverty-stricken country areas all over Southern Africa.

This migrant labour system also saves the bosses from paying pensions and other benefits to the workers.

Herded like cattle

African workers are herded like cattle into mine compounds, where no women are allowed. As many as 50 sleep in one room, often on concrete slabs.

Oppression is total. Compound police and the collaborating *indunas* ("boss boys") enforce an iron discipline. Workers are not allowed to organise, and "trouble makers" are

ruthlessly dealt with.

The work is dangerous. Since 1936, 24,000 black miners have been killed and hundreds of thousands injured in accidents (over 100,000 in 1972-1975 alone). Miners work in 1 metre high stopes, as deep as 5,000 metres underground, where temperatures reach over 50°C. Shifts last 8½ hours, and travelling time to the surface and to and from the compounds can take 3 hours.

Life is cheap

In the humid, draughty tunnels, thousands contract pneumonia. Heat exhaustion is common. Many die of lung diseases. The shattering noise of rock drills deafens untold numbers. To the bosses, the life of an African worker is cheap. In 1967, for example, African miners suffering from a combination of severe lung diseases as a result of the work received (on average) a single payment of R576 as compensation. In 1969, Africans totally and permanently disabled in mine accidents each received a mere R1,228. (These are the most recent figures available to us.)

There are 85,000 whites employed on the mines. Today, most of those who work underground function as supervisors of African workers. The wages of many white miners are tied to the amount of ore produced by the African gang they supervise. Their average wages are nearly ten times the wages of African miners. This means an average difference in earnings of R6,835 per year. (The average African mineworker earned only R957 in 1975.)

Capitalism has created this racial division between workers. White miners see blacks as a threat to their jobs and higher wages, while black workers experience oppression at the hands of white supervisors. Apartheid on the mines has paved the way for apartheid throughout South African industry.

Low wages, high profits

From 1896 to 1969 the real wages of African miners actually fell steadily. For a long period their actual cash wages fell, while at other times, slight wage increases were overtaken by rises in the price of food, clothing etc. Since 1973, when there was considerable unrest on the mines, the wages of African mineworkers have more than doubled. But of course prices have shot up rapidly as well.

These higher wages have cost the mine owners nothing! They have worked out a deal with white supervisors which results in at least an hour's extra work being done by African workers at the start of each shift. On top of



Workers on a Witwatersrand gold mine

that, the price of gold rose dramatically for a period.

Look how the profits of the mine capitalists have increased! In 1972, before the wage rises, the total profits of the gold mines were five times as much as the total wages paid to African workers. After the rise in African wages, total profits in 1974 were nearly eight times as much as African wages!

Militant struggles

For almost a hundred years, African mine workers have carried on militant struggles against the virtual slavery of the migrant labour system, their low wages and shocking working conditions. In most periods of mass working class action in South Africa, the miners have played an important part.

★ The strike of 70,000 African miners in 1919 was important in the formation of the ICU (Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union).

★ The rise of the African Mine Workers' Union during the 1940s made it the backbone of the militant, mass African trade union movement of that time.

★ The strike of 100,000 African miners in 1946 took place against the background of economic and political crisis in South Africa after the war. It helped broaden the ANC into a mass movement.

★ With the severe unemployment and sharply rising prices over the past few years, the mines have again been shaken by revolts of African workers.

Hundreds killed and injured

In the great mine workers' strike of 1946, the African Mine Workers' Union demanded the right to organise, an end to the tribal segregation of workers, and a wage rise from 2s 6d to 10 shillings a day. The capitalists refused to negotiate. The compounds were sealed off by armed police, who tried to force the workers to return to work. Workers striking underground were attacked by police, beaten up, and then driven stope by stope, level by level, to the surface. In all, hundreds of workers were killed and injured by the police (the exact numbers were never made known).

Since 1973, there have been 40 strikes on 23 mines involving 50,000 workers. At least 180 have been killed and over 1,000 injured.

Workers have struck and rioted over wages, over food, and over the dangers of their work. The riots on the Orange Free State mines started when Basotho workers were told that 60



Living conditions inside a mine compound

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Tanzanian workers demonstrate solidarity

The National Union of Tanzanian workers (NUTA) held a great rally in Dar es Salaam on 22nd January against the persecution and murder of trade unionists in South Africa, and in support of SACTU. About 3000 workers marched through the streets behind a contingent of the Tanzanian People's Army, prominent NUTA leaders and a South African contingent led by Aron Pemba, Chairman of SACTU.

At the head of the procession a group of refugee children from Soweto carried posters, one of which read, "We are killed in South Africa — we have friends in Tanzania." The streams of Tanzanian workers carried slogans in support of the South African workers and sang freedom songs.

The demonstration was addressed by the then Prime Minister, Ndugu Rashidi Kawawa, and the General Secretary of NUTA, Ndugu Tandau. SACTU's Chairman replied, praising NUTA for its demonstration of support and solidarity with the workers' struggle in South Africa. "Many workers in the world today have joined hands to isolate the brutal regime of race hatred in South Africa and to help us put an end to that monster," he said.

Apartheid serves the capitalists

"Apartheid," said Pemba, "is certainly not in the interests of any working people, black or white. Apartheid only serves the interests of the exploiters of all workers, black and white. It serves the interests of the big capitalists, the mine and factory owners, the multinational companies, the monopolies and trusts, the financial investors from foreign lands.

"These are the people who benefit from apartheid, because it assures them of super-profits, of enormous returns on their investments which they cannot obtain in other parts of the world. Apartheid makes it possible to

"Workers' Unity" is intended for workers and trade unionists both in South Africa and abroad. To continue producing this and other publications, SACTU urgently needs financial support. Readers outside South Africa are asked to send donations to SACTU's London Office at 49 Rathbone Street, W1A 4NL

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per cent of their wages would be paid to the Lesotho National Bank, and they would only receive it when they completed their contracts.

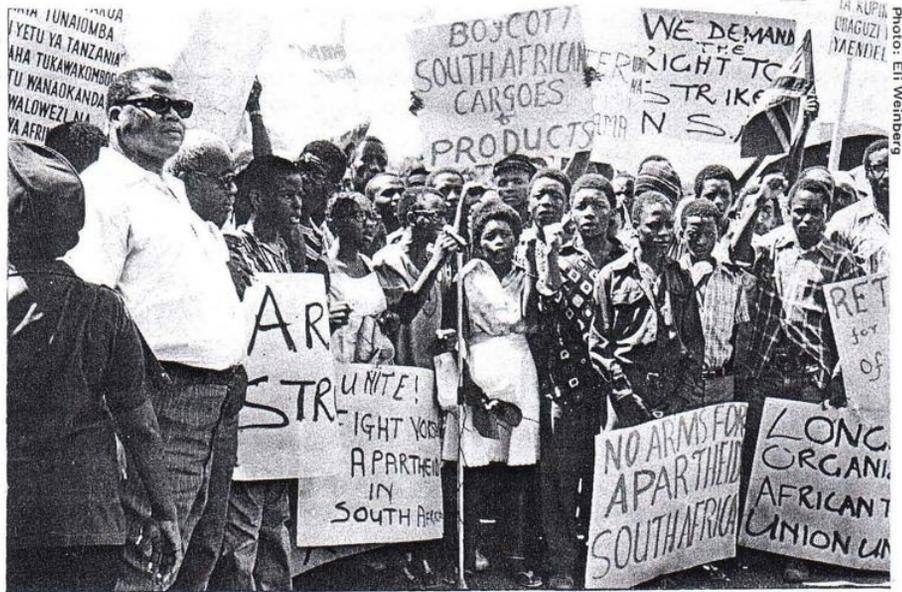
The bosses usually claim that "faction fights" between "tribes" are at the root of trouble on the mines. In fact, these revolts are caused by the brutal exploitation of migrant workers and the conditions under which they are forced to live and work.

Some of the "faction fights" have in fact been attacks by striking workers on those who continued working. On occasions equipment and machinery has been damaged, and administration blocks and recreation centres burned down by workers hitting out against their exploitation and oppression. Sexual frustrations in these all-male compounds have added fuel to these fires.

The bosses are worried

The violent conflict on the mines has the bosses worried. After a hundred years of oppressing and exploiting workers, the capitalists are suddenly asking all sorts of "experts" to find out why the workers appear so unhappy! The government recently held a commission of enquiry into disturbances on the mines — but it has suppressed the commission's report!

The evil reputation of the mines among Africans means that the mine bosses are finding difficulty recruiting enough labour. This is the case even when there are nearly two million Africans unemployed in South Africa! Now collaborators like the Bantustan leaders are being used to help recruit workers for the mines.



Workers demonstrating in Tanzania

enslave the majority of the South African people, to deprive them of their rights, even of the right to build their trade unions.

"In this way they are able to keep the wages of the majority of the people low and extract millions of profit from the sweat and blood of the people. The Government of South Africa thus represents the interests of the most reactionary sections of monopoly capitalism."

Brotherhood in the struggle

Thanking NUTA on behalf of the South African workers for its great act of friendship and brotherhood, Pemba declared that the workers of South Africa would continue their relentless struggle for freedom and "with the support of the entire civilized world, we shall undoubtedly win."

SACTU Executive meets in Dar es Salaam

From 31st December 1976 to 4th January 1977, the extended National Executive Committee of SACTU met in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Every aspect of SACTU's work was reviewed, particularly the work in South Africa.

The Committee took a number of important decisions in the direction of building up new cadres.

A resolution was adopted incorporating all the matters discussed and the decisions taken. In discussing the events of Soweto and subsequent events, the Executive saluted the courage of the people of South Africa in the face of the police onslaught, and congratulated the workers for taking effective strike action in defiance of the armed might of the South African regime. The conference called upon the workers to unite and organise their forces for the overthrow of apartheid and for the transfer of power to the people.

Summarising the work of the Conference, John Gaetsewe, the General Secretary of SACTU said: "SACTU's role in the liberation movement will be greatly enhanced by this conference, as our task is directed towards organising and mobilising the major force against the racist regime — the working class."

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the hope of finding a day's work.

Workers in despair

The *Rand Daily Mail* (14th February) reports two typical examples:

Mr Asaph Morara, 51, a R26-a-week worker in a chemical factory until he was laid off at the beginning of the year, has managed to find casual jobs at R3 a time.

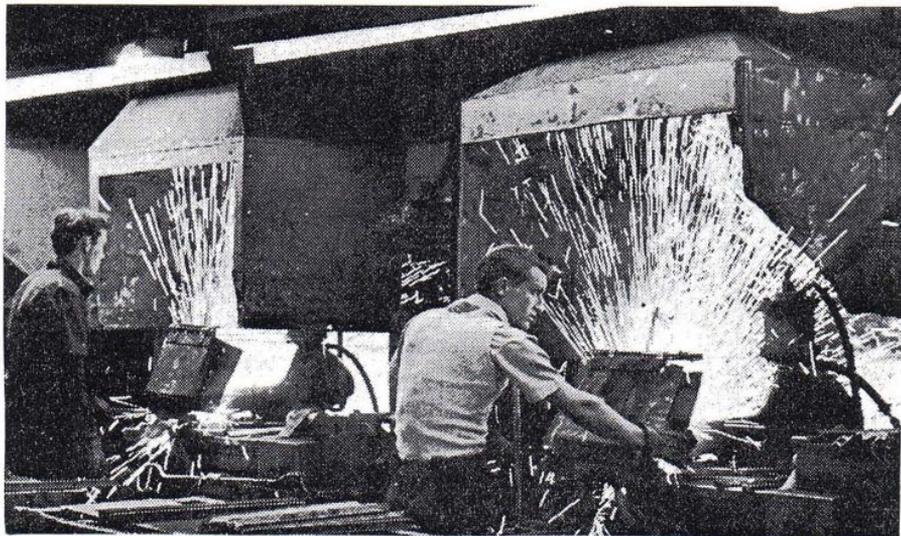
He waits at a secluded point where he can see a prospective employer approaching from a distance. Then, when the man beckons, he rushes to the vehicle.

Mr Morara's married daughter buys him a weekly ticket on which to travel to the city job hunting. He gives his earnings to his wife and never has breakfast or lunch because of the hardship at home. He has seven children.

Mr Andries Mothwanami, who gave his age as "more than 60", comes from Sibasa and worked as a messenger for 20 years for a Johannesburg company which, he says, went bankrupt. He earned R14 a week and was not registered.

"I am sharing a bed with a friend at Merafe Hostel. I lost mine because I could not pay for it. I depend on piece jobs but they are hard to find. Yesterday I sold my wrist watch to get money for train tickets."

*R1 = approx £0.67 or \$1.15



Skilled white workers . . . feeling the squeeze.

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First, the *skilled workers*, whose wages are many times higher than those of semi-skilled and unskilled workers, are struggling to maintain their jobs and living standards against attempts by the employers to force their wages down or replace them with cheaper labour. The skilled workers have only been able to keep their privileges because *the colour bar in industry* has prevented the bosses from employing Africans to do skilled jobs.

What has kept this colour bar in force? Two things: the organised strength of the skilled workers' unions themselves; and government measures (or the threat of measures) such as job reservation to protect the skilled, especially *white*, workers against competition from blacks.

How the skilled workers are squeezed

As years have passed, industry in South Africa has developed enormously. With it has come the use of more and more machinery to do work which was previously done by skilled workers. The skilled workers have become a much smaller part of the whole work-force in South Africa. Hundreds of thousands of unskilled and semi-skilled African workers have streamed into industry, where the capitalists exploit them savagely, paying them starvation wages. The bargaining power of the *skilled workers' unions* has been getting steadily less as a result.

While the power of the skilled workers' unions has been falling, the other support which they rely on has been crumbling away at the same time. That is, they can no longer rely *confidently* on protection by the *government* against the attempts of the bosses to replace them with cheap labour.

Why is this so? Because as the economy has developed, a new class of Afrikaner industrialist has risen up within the ruling Nationalist Party to share wealth and power with the English-speaking and foreign capitalists who together control production in South Africa. As this has happened, the state has leaned ever more *openly* to the side of big business.

The skilled workers have felt a cold wind blowing down their necks for years now! And this applies not only to the skilled workers in TUCSA. In July 1969, for instance, white workers in the Confederation of Labour were complaining bitterly that the government no longer cared for the welfare of the workers (meaning themselves!) and was more concerned about the interests of big capital.

The real threat

We can see that what *really* threatens the security of the skilled workers is the *capitalist system* — the constant attempts of the bosses to raise profits by pushing down the cost of labour.

All along, the skilled workers have been

threatened with replacement by African workers. As a result of this, the skilled workers' struggle *against the capitalists* has diverted into hostility (sometimes violent hostility) *against Africans*. For a great many years white skilled workers have reacted in this way, but as some Coloured and Indian workers have moved into skilled jobs they too have come under the same pressures.

Within TUCSA, it is these *skilled workers* (white, Coloured and Indian) who have all along made up the *hard core* opposing the advancement of African workers. The semi-skilled machine operators in TUCSA, and other unions of unskilled and semi-skilled workers (such as shop workers, for example) have a clear interest in joining hands with African workers in a strong, united trade union movement. But many of these unions are controlled by a hard crust of *bureaucrats* — bossy officials who are interested mainly in their own positions and power. They stand above the workers, and manipulate "constitutions" and "procedures" in order to suppress democracy within the unions.

These union officials, like the TUCSA leaders themselves, are always giving in to pressure from the right wing — from the skilled workers' unions within TUCSA — and selling the true interests of the workers for their own personal advantage. This is why TUCSA has always had such a shameful record of betraying African workers!

Nothing has changed!

Does TUCSA's latest policy of setting up "parallel unions" mean that all this has changed? Is TUCSA now genuinely supporting the interests of all workers, *including the African workers who are the vast majority of the working class*? NO, NOT AT ALL!

The secret purpose behind "parallel unions" becomes clear when we look again at the position of skilled workers, whose interests have always dominated TUCSA.

For all their hostility towards Africans, the skilled workers have found that *even* they cannot afford to leave the African workers *entirely* unorganised and entirely at the mercy of the bosses. Why is this so?

We have said that the power of the skilled workers' unions has been declining and that they can no longer absolutely trust the government to protect them against the bosses. So what can they do?

Listen to how the skilled workers see the problem. In 1967 the Boilermakers', Iron and Steel Workers', Shipbuilders' and Welders' Society (a white, Coloured and Indian skilled workers' union which was a founder of TUCSA) had a hard time getting wage increases from the bosses, despite the fact that prices were going up. A spokesman for the union asked why the bosses could "take such a strong line when the country is said to be chronically short of skilled labour?"

He found the answer in the fact that his union represented only 15 per cent of the workers in the industry. The 75 per cent of workers who are African were "represented" by the "man from the government." As a result, of course, the Africans' wages stayed at starvation level. The Boilermakers felt that it was "essential to organise Africans into recognised trade unions under responsible leadership in order to prevent this huge section of our common labour force being exploited and having a depressing effect on our own wages as well as their own." (By "responsible leadership" this person obviously meant leadership which the skilled workers could *control*!)

No genuine commitment

Of course this touching concern for the exploitation of African workers sprang *entirely from the skilled workers' self-interest* and was in no sense a genuine commitment to working-class solidarity. Less than a year later the same Boilermakers' Society appealed to the government to reserve *all jobs in the entire engineering industry* for white, Coloured and Indian workers — a step which would have meant the *sacking of 200,000 Africans!* But that was something the capitalists and the government couldn't allow!

The skilled workers are left with a "thorny problem": *How to organise African workers against the bosses while still controlling them and keeping them down!*

Obviously this is an impossible task, and the TUCSA magicians who have tried to perform it have ended up tying themselves in knots!

Breathtaking cheek!

They have experimented with all sorts of policies in the hope of satisfying all their member unions. At one point they argued for greater powers to be given to *government officials* to press for higher wages for Africans! At another they demanded that the registered white, Coloured and Indian unions or TUCSA itself be granted the right to represent African workers. (In fact they had the breathtaking cheek to put forward the latter proposal in the *very same resolution in which they kicked African unions out of TUCSA!*) Finally, after all the about-turns over whether African unions could belong to TUCSA, the "parallel union" idea was thought up.

Nothing has changed! This is just the latest idea for making sure that African unions are kept obedient to the wishes of the skilled workers. They are to be tightly controlled by their "parallel" masters — the bureaucrats in the registered unions.

As it happens, even "parallel unions" have proved too much for some of the skilled workers in TUCSA. Recently the Boilermakers' Society pulled out of TUCSA in dissatisfaction, shortly followed by the National Union of Furniture and Allied Workers (a union of Coloured and Indian skilled workers).

Away with "parallel unions"!

Workers! Neither TUCSA nor its "parallel unions" hold any future for the South African working class. Along that path lies frustration, increasing racial division, and the continued enslavement of *all workers*, skilled and unskilled, under capitalist rule.

All workers must oppose "parallel unions"! African workers must reject them with contempt!

The *independent* organisation of African workers into strong trade unions under their own democratic control is *vital* important — the *foundation* for the united trade union movement that must be built.

Only a powerful, independent and *non-racial* trade union movement can defend the rights and true interests of all South Africa's workers together. No doubt it will take a long time and much bitter conflict before the skilled workers can even begin to see the truth of this.

**FIGHT FOR INDEPENDENT UNIONS!
AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL!**