

This paper has been mailed to a large number of individuals and organizations in South Africa.

# WORKERS'

Organ of the South African Congress of Trade Unions

"An injury to one is an injury to all"

# UNITY

Issue No. 6, November 1977

## Demand R50 a week minimum wage!

★ In August, Mr. Charlie Ntangabile (aged 38) was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for stealing two cakes because he was hungry.

★ Last month, Mrs Annie Ntuli (a 100 year-old widow) and her family were evicted from their home in Soweto because they were unable to pay the rent.

These are just two individual cases, but they show the sufferings which face all black working people in South Africa today. The majority of our people live on the borders of starvation; the average wages of African workers are well below the breadline.

### We make it, they take it

Everything in South Africa — the roads, bridges, factories, machines — has been built by the strength of the workers. And yet we stay poor! Poor, because the bosses, who own the mines, factories and farms, take what we produce each day, sell it, and give back to us as wages barely enough to keep ourselves alive. The rest they keep for themselves, buying more factories, and making themselves rich and powerful.

The key to the bosses' wealth, and to the workers' poverty, is WAGES.

For the workers, wages are the means to life.

But for the bosses, wages are just another cost, like machines or raw materials. The lower

the wage, the lower his cost and the greater his profit.

### The struggle

And this is what the struggle in the factory is all about. The boss does all in his power to keep wages as low as he can. The workers do all they can to force wages up.

The bosses are supported in this struggle by the government, the army and police. They rely on the apartheid system, with its pass laws, its "Bantustans", and its migrant labour system to keep African labour docile and cheap.

We workers organise ourselves politically to struggle against this system; we organise trade unions to fight in the factories for higher wages.

Hard struggles by black workers, like the magnificent Durban strikes in 1973, forced African wages up from about R9.13 per week in 1970 to about R24.04 per week in 1977. Coloured workers' wages rose from R17.90 to R36.53; and Indian workers' wages from R20.07 to R44.23. All these are average wages, and do not include farm or domestic workers, who are the worst paid of all.

(Over this same period the wages of white workers, on whom the apartheid system relies for political support, went up from R62.38 to R111.55 per week.)

### Average wages per week (1976)

	White	Coloured	Asian	African
Mining/ Quarrying	R164.50	R43.01	R63.48	R20.36
Manufacturing	R131.75	R35.70	R42.28	R28.78
Construction	R128.62	R50.05	R68.53	R25.88
Retail	R 58.94	R25.47	R35.36	R18.93
Hotels/ Transport*	R 60.33	R18.56	R32.79	R12.36

A white chief-executive earns between R60,000 and R80,000 per year (including "perks"), which works out at between R1100 and R1500 per week.

\*Estimate

### No real improvement

But these wage increases have brought no real improvement to the standard of living of black workers. This is for two reasons.

Firstly, the prices of the things we need, of food, clothing, transport and rent, have been going up rapidly. Some estimates show that the cost of living in Soweto has risen by almost 30% in a year.

Secondly, unemployment attacks our wages. Because more members of our families are out of work, our wages have to be spread further in helping one another to survive.

We are back where we were before the Durban strikes! We went hungry then, we go hungry now.

### For a living wage

So what do we do? We organise and fight for a living wage — for a national minimum of R50 per week. We demand this for all workers, men and women, in the mines, on the farms, and in the factories and kitchens. Whatever the difficulties we face, wherever we struggle for higher wages, we must make this our fighting demand.

But simply demanding R50 per week is not enough. We know so well the bosses' trick of pushing prices up as soon as we get higher wages. So along with our demand for R50, we must also demand automatic further increases whenever the prices of the things we need go up. This is an important demand to fight for, not only for factory workers, but particularly for the most defenceless workers — those in farming and domestic service, where it is hard to organise and where the bosses keep wages lowest.

### Bossed horrified

The bosses of course are horrified at this demand of ours. They say they "can't afford it". But we are not impressed by what they say they can "afford". We have known too much poverty and hunger among our fellow workers; we have seen too many riches in the hands of the bosses.

Our struggle for higher wages is a just struggle. It is part of the struggle to take what is rightfully ours — the wealth we produce. Each step along the way is difficult, but it is the only way if we and our children are to survive.

The money in our pockets is the measure of our fighting strength.

**ORGANISE! FIGHT FOR A NATIONAL MINIMUM OF R50 PER WEEK! DEMAND AUTOMATIC INCREASES LINKED TO PRICE RISES!**



Prices are rising faster than wages. Not only must we demand a minimum wage for all workers of R50 a week, but also the right to automatic increases in future to keep pace with the cost of living.

# Food production rises, but ... WORKERS STAY HUNGRY

In 1942 witnesses to a government inquiry in South Africa pointed to the serious problem of starvation among the black people, and urged immediate measures to improve conditions and standards of living.

Today, after decades of rapid economic growth, the ordinary working people still suffer grinding poverty. For the millions of black workers and their families, *hunger is a daily experience.*

Why is this so? Is it because the number of people is increasing faster than food production? *No.* Population is growing by 2.5% a year while agricultural produce is rising by 4% a year. For example, twenty-five years ago South African maize output reached only 40 million bags a year. Today it is up to about 120 million bags.

## No benefit for the workers

But, far from getting the benefit of this extra food, the working people stay hungry as before. In fact, they are suffering attacks on their already miserable standard of living.

Wages are kept down, unemployment is growing by about 27,000 a month, and the prices of basic necessities (including bread and maize) have been going up sharply.

Why are the mass of the people kept on the edge of starvation when more and more food is being produced each year? The answer is: *because of the capitalist system.* Because of the system by which production takes place, not to benefit the working people, but *to make profits* for the rich few who own the big farms, mines, banks and industries.

## Only the bare minimum

No matter how much food (and other goods) the workers produce, this profit system of the capitalists results in the workers getting *only the bare minimum* which they and their families need to survive.

The capitalists' method for making profits out of our labour is centuries old. Everywhere, the foundations of the system have been laid in the same way.

Firstly, the capitalists make us work for them. They make us *depend on them for a living* by taking the land away by force. This is exactly what the Boers and British did in South Africa, starting from the early years of colonisation. And the process did not stop there. Since 1960, for example, no less than 1½ million black people have been stripped of the last vestiges of land-holding in the so-called "white areas" and deported to the reserves.

Once the land is taken, the people have no choice but to hire themselves out as labourers to the capitalists in return for a *wage*.

## Wage labour

And *wage labour* is precisely *the means by*



For these mine-workers — mielle-meal served with a shovel. For the bosses — steak on a silver plate.

## The lie:

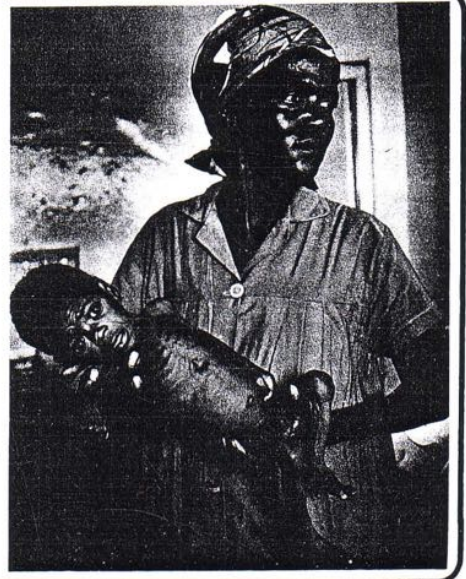
"Nobody goes to bed hungry in South Africa."

— Hendrik Schoeman, SA Minister of Agriculture  
September 1977.

## The truth:

In a recent study at a Johannesburg hospital for blacks, 58% of the patients under the age of 10 were significantly malnourished. Of the children up to 2 years old, 80% suffered from malnutrition.

— Reported in the Johannesburg Star,  
3 September 1976.



which capitalists make profits from the workers' toil.

Suppose I am a gold miner. During one shift I dig out gold which the capitalist who owns the mine sells for (say) R10. Let us say that the cost of the electricity and water, and the wear and tear on the tools used by me during the shift, amount to R2.50. That leaves R7.50 over out of the R10 received for the gold.

Out of this the capitalist pays me (say) R2.50 as wages for the shift, and *pockets the other R5 himself.*

Now suppose the capitalist uses some of the profit to buy bigger and better drills and machinery, so that I can dig out twice as much gold as before in a single shift. This gold is sold for R20 now instead of R10 as before. But who gets the extra money? Will my wages increase as a result?

This is a question which any experienced worker (whether in the mines, factories or on the farms) will be able to answer clearly.

## Barely enough to see us through

Out of my wages I have to feed, clothe and house myself and my family. The wages I am paid for one shift, or day or week, are always only barely enough to see us through to the next.

The capitalist, of course, is in a very different position. Not only does he receive each shift the profit from *my* labour, but also the profit from the labour of every other worker like me that he employs. The more profit he makes, the more he can expand his operation in order to make more profits still.

The capitalist is "legally entitled" to this

profit (under laws made by *his* government and enforced by *his* police and courts) simply because he *owns* the mine (or factory or farm, as the case may be). He is in fact a worthless parasite on society, living off the labour of the people. Yet he is the master of us all, increasing his power constantly the more profits he makes at our expense.

## Still go hungry

It is because of this system that we, the working people would still go hungry even if the amount of food produced in our country was increased ten times!

What, in fact, happens today to all the food which we workers produce but cannot buy because we are paid starvation wages? The employers and their government come together and *export* out of the country as much of it as they can.

The South African capitalists are anxious to sell as much food as possible to other countries, because this enables them to buy *machinery* from those countries in return. This machinery they put to use on the farms, in the mines and in the factories to increase production and profits.

But again, as we have seen, because this is a capitalist system workers do not get any benefit from the increased production which results from the use of machines. We simply find that our labour is being *replaced* by machinery, and the employers simply throw us out into unemployment.

## If food was not exported?

Some people imagine that, if South Africa simply stopped exporting food, we would all get enough to eat. Is this the answer? Not a bit.

Already, more food is being produced in South Africa than the capitalists can find buyers for on the export market. Schoeman, the Minister of Agriculture, says "we" (he means the capitalists) now have a problem of "food surpluses". In other words, they are saying there is *too much food. TOO MUCH FOOD!* While we, the black workers, are *starving!*

Our rulers actually *destroy*, or dump in the sea, perfectly good food which we cannot afford to buy with our wages and they cannot sell overseas.

And this sort of disgusting, *criminal* thing is

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# What the bannings mean

In its latest sweep of bannings and detentions, the apartheid regime has taken a step of very great significance.

*Not* because there is anything *new* about such measures. There isn't.

*Not* because they will achieve their purpose of taming the mass resistance of the black people. They won't. What Kruger has failed to smash with bullets, he cannot hope to destroy with the pen.

Why, then, are they so significant? Because the government is declaring in the plainest language that no truce is possible; that it intends to fight to the death. Because it has slammed shut the door marked "Concessions and Reforms" — a door which before was held temptingly ajar to entice the oppressed people from devotion to the struggle.

## Nothing to offer

Of course, the liberation movement has long explained that the system in South Africa *has nothing of value to offer the mass of the people*, by way of concessions and reforms. In fact, the crisis of capitalism in South Africa forces our rulers to *intensify* still further the exploitation of the working people. For us they have no recipe but repression and more repression.

But now they are *admitting* that fact plainly, and a lot sooner perhaps than might have been expected. Their show of strength is in fact a demonstration of their weakness. Their much-trumpeted policies of "reform" will boil down in practice to a few paltry schemes to bribe collaborators, from the upper levels of the black middle classes, to take the side of the exploiters.

## The task

The forcible overthrow of the apartheid regime, and of the system on which it rests, is the task which the liberation movement has set itself for many years. Today that task is posed more clearly than ever before in the consciousness of the people.

Knowing the task is the first step towards achieving it.

## The underground

Bitter experience has taught our people to *use open forms of organisation but not to rely on them*, for they are fragile and easily attacked. For years now, real organisation has been going on *below the surface*. The 1973 Durban strikes showed this; so did the political general strikes last year and this year. And the work of the youth and students, mobilising their forces in the streets, acting against collaborators, maintaining the school-strikes — all this has been achieved with the help of underground methods of organisation.

While continuing to create and use open organisation wherever that can advance the struggle, *we must now emphasise more than ever before the need to build the underground.*

## The way forward

For the militant youth the way forward is clear: turn towards the traditional organisations of the liberation movement; strengthen the permanent forces of the ANC and SACTU within the country. *Root yourselves in the workers' movement*; link up with the workers, support their struggles, and help to build their organisations within the factories.

Prepare for a drawn-out struggle; work to deepen the contradictions which our rulers face; maintain the pressure and let their weaknesses and desperation grow for all to see. Avoid adventures which may lead on our side to demoralisation and defeat.

Above all — study. Theory is the guide to action. Learn the lessons of the revolutionary workers' struggle and its history in every country of the world. Arm yourselves with revolutionary theory, and against every kind of opportunism and reformism.

## Food production rises, but ... THE WORKERS STAY HUNGRY

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by no means peculiar to South Africa either. In America, for example, the government actually pays farmers to *reduce* the amount of food they produce — when 75,000 people are starving to death in the world every week! That is capitalism for you.

### Fight back!

Workers do not, of course, resign themselves to the fate of poverty and misery under this system. In South Africa, as elsewhere, we fight back. We fight back by organising ourselves both politically and into trade unions. We demand a living wage, not a starvation wage.

But the capitalists know very well that if they give in to our just demands and pay a living wage, their profits will go down. So they bring in the police and the army to control the workers and drive us back to work when we go on strike.

Others they ban or banish to the reserves. They make sure that a large number of workers are always unemployed, desperate for work. The capitalists use the threat of the unemployed to keep wages down, prevent strikes, and replace workers who struggle against them.

### Chained down

They keep the black workers chained down under the pass laws and the migrant labour system. They bribe the white workers and their trade unions to help in policing the black workers. They hire Matanzima, Buthelezi, Mangope, etc., to help keep the workers under control. They try to turn the middle classes against the working class. They use racism to divide the workers. They try to corrupt the workers' own organisations and turn their leaders into collaborators.

The struggle for a living wage is a struggle which demands the unity and full commitment of every worker. But, in the long run, only the liberation struggle holds the *solution* to the starvation of the black working people.

The workers can only end hunger and poverty by destroying apartheid *and by taking control of production themselves*. Then and only then will we be able to work together for the benefit of all. *Then and only then will food be grown in South Africa, not for the profit of the few, but to feed the people.*

Earlier this year the Minister of Labour, S.P. Botha, declared that trade unions were not the answer for African workers. Instead, he wanted workers to "sit down under a tree" with their employer.

This is how the cartoonist Richard Smith saw it:



## Did you know?

★ The Unemployment Insurance Fund has assets of R208 million. But, out of an estimated 2 million unemployed workers in South Africa, only 27,353 receive payments. Instead of being used for the benefit of the workers, the assets of the Fund are being used to invest in industries in the Bantustans and to provide cash for armaments.

★ The government is to build only 970 houses in Soweto this year. Close on 25,000 Soweto families are on the *official waiting list* for homes, and this number is reported to be growing by more than 2000 a year.

★ Old age state pensions for Africans range between R14 and R20.50 per month.

## Wage Board to review minimum

After the Durban strikes of 1973, the government hastily set the Wage Board to work reviewing wages for unskilled workers who are not covered by any other wage determinations. The minimum wages laid down then by the Wage Board were:

R14.50 per week in the Cape Peninsula;  
R13.00 per week on the Reef, in Durban and Port Elizabeth;

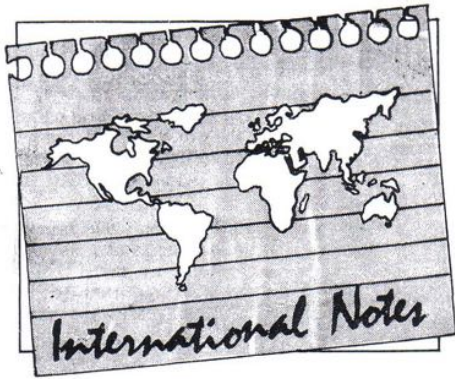
R12.00 per week in Bloemfontein and Kimberley;  
R10.00 per week in East London.

These wages were scheduled to rise by R2 over the next two years.

Now after the uprising of Soweto, and the three-day strikes of last year and this year, the government has told the Wage Board to look at minimum unskilled wages again.

The Wage Board is there to serve the bosses. It brings the bosses together in different areas, listens to their problems and complaints, and then decides on a wage that will suit all of them. However, the Wage Board sittings are also supposed to be open to workers.

In the past, workers have often made use of the Wage Board sittings as a useful platform to put across and publicise their wage demands. Workers in every area should now consider the tactic of going to the Wage Board sittings to put forward the demand of a R50-a-week minimum wage.



## International trade union seminar held in Lusaka

"The need to strengthen the international trade union movement on the basis of unity of action" was the theme of an International Trade Union Seminar held recently in Lusaka, Zambia.

The seminar, which was organised by the ZCTU and supported by the Trade Union International of Food and Allied Workers and the ILO, called for the total isolation and boycott of the racist regimes of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. It was important for trade unions to develop solidarity links with the Southern African liberation movements in their struggle against racial and national oppression, inhuman exploitation and neo-colonialism.

The role of trade unions in developing countries was also discussed. There are particular problems for the trade union struggle in areas where the continuing dominance of neo-colonialism and multi-national companies hampers social development.

"Precisely because of the lack of joint action or sufficiently united efforts," it was stated, "the trade union movement today is not in a position to make a decisive stand against the corporations while at the same time the big monopolies are perfecting their methods of international exploitation."

## EEC "Code" aims to deceive

In September, the foreign ministers of the European Common Market (EEC) countries adopted a so-called "code of conduct" which foreign companies with investments in South Africa are supposed to adhere to.

Britain and the United States already had drawn up similar "guidelines" for their companies, though the EEC code contains some new features. It recommends, for example, that employers should negotiate with African trade unions if African employees want this. It accepts that migrant labour in South Africa is "an instrument of apartheid" and that employers have a "social responsibility" to contribute to ensuring freedom of movement for their employees.

The code even proposes a minimum wage at least 50% higher than the "level required to satisfy the basic needs of an employer and his family."

### The purpose behind the "code"

The imperialist powers are adopting measures like the "code of conduct" for two very clear reasons. Firstly, they are afraid of the growing power and militant struggle of the working class in South Africa. Therefore, they want employers to follow paternalistic policies towards black workers, instead of the naked brutality which they have shown up to now.

Secondly, they are afraid of the growing campaign being mounted by workers, trade unions and anti-apartheid organisations overseas to force investors to pull out of South Africa and isolate the apartheid regime completely. The imperialists are trying desperately to protect their own investments and interests in South Africa.

Hence the EEC "code of conduct".

### To forestall pressures

The newspapers in the West virtually admit

this. The London *Financial Times* wrote that the EEC code was adopted by the big powers to forestall pressures for the EEC to take stronger measures of economic sanctions against South Africa.

Also, the big powers are worried about losing friends in Africa. A French government spokesman has conceded that "the main purpose of the code is to create a climate conducive to some form of dialogue with African states, which have a personal feeling for the racial situation in South Africa."

The governments involved in this "code" are making the most of it, posing as true friends of liberation. They hope to confuse the workers in South Africa, encourage them to rely on the "goodwill" of imperialism, and so distract them from advancing the liberation struggle.

### Clear hypocrisy

But the hypocrisy of the imperialist governments is clear. Britain and the United States came to establish their "guidelines" only after the 1973 Durban strikes. The EEC "code" has been adopted only after the uprisings of the past year, including the political general strikes.

What is more, just as they failed to enforce the earlier "guidelines", so they have no intention of enforcing the "code". And they have provided no means of enforcing it.

In fact, the employers have already indicated their contempt for even these small crumbs which are being suggested to bribe the South African workers. The employers are determined to cling on to their profits and give nothing away.

### False claims

Employers' associations in West Germany, France and Britain either claim quite falsely that they are already implementing the code (!) or else, contradictorily, say they do not regard

## Profits up, jobs down

The world economic crisis which peaked in 1976 hit automobile workers in the USA very hard. During the year 200,000 auto workers were laid off, and many motor manufacturing plants were shut down. In Michigan state, 185,000 auto workers used up the 26 weeks of unemployment compensation granted by law, and had to go onto welfare or leave the state to try to find work elsewhere.

Isn't it a surprise then to find that the total profits of the three huge US multinational automobile companies (General Motors, Ford and Chrysler) reached a staggering \$4.3 billion in 1976? The profits of General Motors alone were \$2.9 billion after tax. In other words, on a 40-hour week, GM made \$24,167 profit every minute during the year.

In November 1976 the United Auto Workers' Union negotiated new benefits for the General Motors workers. Whatever the cost of these benefits, they obviously did not make a dent in the huge profits of the company.

Chrysler's profits were so high at \$432 million, that the company could afford to set aside \$18 million for bonuses and rewards for its executives. For the workers at Chrysler the reward is a threat of further shut-downs

themselves as bound by it.

Representatives of individual companies have been even more arrogant and outspoken. The code, said the Managing Director of Philips SA, was a "paper tiger". "Like other businesses, our labour policies are dictated by what suits our needs." He even had the cheek to admit that "it's fairly hypocritical to send back (overseas) a regular report saying what marvellous things we're doing."

Numerous other big employers have reacted in a similar way.

### Will not be bound

The employers in South Africa will not be bound by any "code of conduct" which affects their profits. Nor will the South African workers be bound or confused by such "codes"!

We will rely on our own forces, not on any supposed "goodwill" of the employers — and will continue to struggle for full liberation. And liberation means not paternalism by the bosses, but a society in which we can decide our own destiny.



"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.

## Warning to readers in SA

Readers in South Africa should take care not to be found with "Workers' Unity" in their possession, as it is banned.

# South Africa's textile workers

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

The growth of the textile industry in South Africa has been closely bound up with the implementation of apartheid policy and attacks on workers' organisations. And the industry has been built on the exploitation of workers both as producers and consumers — both through the profits made from their labour and the tariffs which raise the price of blankets.

Throughout the history of the textile industry, workers have fought to build a high level of working-class unity, not only with fellow spinners and weavers, but with all South African workers. The textile union was a founder member of SACTU, giving it financial and organisational support.

## Key grievances

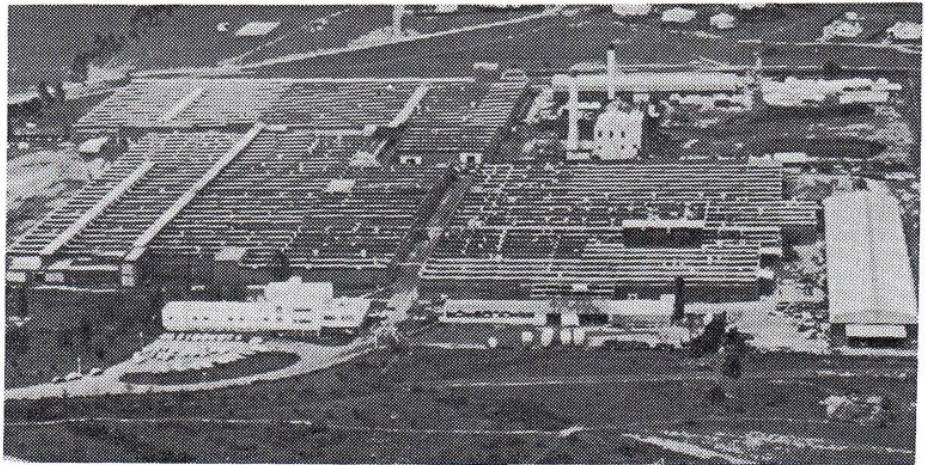
Textile workers have fought a militant struggle for better wages and working conditions. The key grievances of the workers relate to the form of exploitation and the type of work done in the industry.

- ★ Starvation wages.
- ★ Long hours (46 hours a week) and forced overtime.
- ★ Discrimination against women, who earn at least 20% less than the minimum rates of pay and who are often forced to take birth control pills.
- ★ Piece rates, which are changed whenever workers start achieving an improved wage.
- ★ Fines for being late for work, and attendance bonuses instead of increased wages.
- ★ Permanent night shift as a condition of service for many; women workers being forced to work all hours of the night.
- ★ The use of child labour in some factories.
- ★ Pension schemes which tax workers for the benefit of the companies, and oppressive sick- and medical-benefit schemes.

## Workers resist

Workers have fought determined struggles against these conditions. They have used strikes, go-slows and sabotage of automatic looms as weapons in their struggle. The bosses and the government have responded to these struggles with bannings, detentions, death, prosecutions, victimisation and mass dismissals. Altogether, from 1950, some 27 trade unionists in the textile industry have been banned, many others detained (the latest being June-Rose Nala and Obed Zuma of the NUTW in Natal), and a number have been murdered.

These attacks have made the workers keenly aware of the link between low wages and oppression; between the employers and the



The Good Hope Textile factory at Kingwilliamstown has been the scene of major strikes by African workers. In August 1974, 3500 stopped work to support their demand for a wage rise from R9 to R24 a week. Police with dogs were called in to assist the management. Again, in October last year, police used teargas to disperse strikers at the plant.

government. The employers have also responded by moving many massive textile mills to the "border" and "Bantustan" areas, where wages are extremely low and where resistance is more difficult.

## History of struggle

The period of the 1950s was one in which bitter struggles were fought in the textile industry around the defence of existing conditions. For example, a long strike was fought against the massive Frame Group in 1957, not to improve wages but to resist a wage reduction. Employers and the government were determined to force wages down at a time when prices were being

against apartheid. From 29-31 May 1961, the Frame Group's Consolidated Textile Mills were closed down when workers responded to the stay-at-home call.

## Durban strikes

The textile workers, who had suffered an enormous reduction in living standards during the 1950s and 1960s, seized the initiative in 1973. They were in the forefront of the mass strike movement in the Durban/Pinetown area. From experience gained through long struggle, these workers refused to identify themselves as lone

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... increased prices, and standards laid the basis for the growth of monopoly textile companies, like the Frame Group.

Between 1955 and 1963, in the blanket section, the wages of weavers were held down at R11.40\* per week, and those of spinners at R8.84. Large numbers of women were brought into the industry at 20% lower rates. During the strikes at Amato textile mills, in the Frame mills at Pinetown, and elsewhere, cotton workers struggled to raise their wages to even these miserable levels.

Despite the heavy pressure on the workers, they participated fully in the mass protests and strikes organised by the Congress Alliance

... cannot afford to buy in the shops," the workers said.

But because they did not have the funds to sustain the strike, the workers were eventually forced to accept the small increases. They were by no means beaten, and returned to the factories determined to carry on the struggle. For the first time in many years, the employers had been forced to raise wages instead of firing strikers.

As a result of the strikes, wages in the textile industry increased from R10.99 in 1970 to R21.84 in 1975. Between 1972-4 alone, wages increased 37%, an increase unparalleled in the history of the industry. But while these higher rates were victories for the workers, rising prices wiped out much of the increases. Real wages in 1975 were in fact only equal to R12.73, when measured against the R10.99 earned in 1970.

## Textile industry and the crisis

The economic crisis in South Africa has affected the textile industry severely, and weakened the position of textile workers. The deep problems of the industry are shown by the inability of South African textile mills to compete with low-priced imports from South America and the Far East.

The employers hope to solve this crisis by increasing the productivity of the workers while holding down wages — and so bring down the price of South African textiles. This they do by attacking workers' organisation, and by introducing more machines to increase the output of each worker.

Net output per worker in the industry increased from an average of R1111 (1957-59) to R2207 in 1972. As a result, profit per worker increased from R193 in 1956, to R527 in 1970.

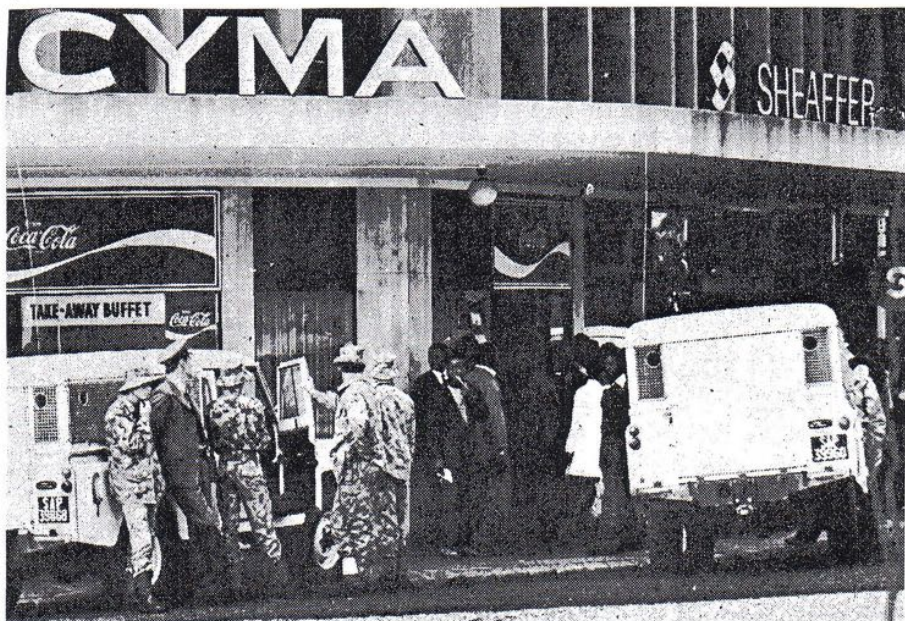
But the rising struggle of the workers brought

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Scene inside a textile factory in Natal.

\*R1 = approx. \$1.15



*A Johannesburg company advertised recently for four workers. 200 black workers arrived to apply for the jobs. Someone panicked and rang the police, and, within minutes, two van loads of riot police arrived and stood by in case they were needed.*

## Workers harassed by police

★ The Metal and Allied Workers' Union, together with three other unions in the Transvaal, Natal and at Port Elizabeth, are complaining of police harassment of their members. Security policemen have been going to the factories to interrogate workers about the unions.

★ Armed police were called in when 300 black drivers employed by the South African Railways in Kazerne, Johannesburg, went on strike in late September. Their grievances were that black drivers were being sacked and replaced by whites, to protect white workers against unemployment, and that black drivers were being sacked if they stopped along the road to relieve themselves or to buy food. The strike ended when the management agreed to re-instate 7 sacked drivers.

★ Police were called in to quell a disturbance involving between 800 and 1000 workers at Black Rock manganese mine, north-east of Kuruman, on 14 August. Workers set fire to an administrative building, kitchen and sleeping quarters. Damage is estimated at R30,000.

★ 186 workers at Scottford Mills, Ladysmith, were charged in August under the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act for striking illegally. These workers, 30 men and 156 women, several of whom were pregnant, were refused bail.

## More unions leave Tucsa

Three more unions have pulled out of TUCSA, following the Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers' Union which withdrew earlier this year. The latest to go are the Brewery Employees' Union (in 1974 they had 40 white and 109 coloured and Indian members); the Jewellers and Goldsmiths Union (in 1974, 98 white and 320 coloured and Asian members); and the European Liquor and Catering Union (In 1974, 1001 white members).

These unions announced their withdrawal at the latest TUCSA Conference, held in Durban in September. They complain that TUCSA is moving too far to the Right, that it is becoming increasingly undemocratic, and that it disregards the needs of the smaller unions.

### Undemocratic executive powers

They are particularly opposed to a change which was made to the TUCSA constitution at the recent conference, which gives the national executive power to suspend trade union officials from TUCSA activities.

The three unions claim that this change was introduced specifically to deal with their joint-secretary, Ted Frazer, who has supported the efforts of workers in the Garment Workers' Union of the Western Province to replace their present leadership. This leadership is accused

of, among other things, failing to take up the fight for real improvements in wages, and of getting salaries way above what the members earn.

While TUCSA has lost three unions, it has gained one — the right-wing Mines Surface Officials' Association (10,600 white members) which at the TUCSA conference refused to support a resolution condemning the deaths of political detainees.

### Turmoil among registered unions

This movement of unions into and out of TUCSA reveals the turmoil among many registered trade unions at the present time. Some of those which have broken away are searching for ways to struggle effectively against unemployment and inflation. Inevitably they will be forced to turn towards the independent African unions to find the basis for such a struggle.

TUCSA on the other hand is looking for some kind of "unity" with the whites-only unions of the right-wing Confederation of Labour. There have been calls from within TUCSA and the Confederation for such unity, which aims to protect the privileged position of skilled workers at the expense of the mass of the working class.

## Textile workers ...

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an end to the steady increases in the level of exploitation, and since 1973 output per worker has fallen by about 5%. This worsened the crisis faced by the textile employers, and the government had to take emergency measures in 1974 to prevent the collapse of the industry.

### Continuing struggle

The upsurge in working-class action in 1973 provided new opportunities for textile workers to organise. In Natal, close co-operation developed between Indian and African workers, and between the registered union (Textile Workers' Industrial Union) and the unregistered union (National Union of Textile Workers). The cotton workers in the giant Frame Mills played a particularly important role in developing these organisations.

These workers, many of whom are young migrant women recruited from the Transkei on false promises of good wages and accommodation, became the most energetic members of the unions. While many leading workers were victimised, the strikes continued and victimised workers became the new organisers of the unions.

A weavers' strike at Consolidated Textile Mills in August 1973 brought home to workers the necessity for collective action of workers of all occupations throughout the industry. Leaders of the weavers were victimised and 20 charged with striking illegally.

### Strike action

The growing organisation of textile workers, although small in comparison with the total number of workers employed (only about 10% of all textile workers have joined unions), has led to an increasing number of organised struggles. These have included not only wage demands, but also (for example) demands to scrap liaison committees and remove police agents in the factories.

A cotton workers' strike in Pinetown in January 1974 was a combined struggle for higher wages, and against collaborators and company spies. Workers rejected a wage offer which had been accepted by the liaison committee. During the strike, workers shouted down the Labour Department official and demanded representation through their union. Mass arrests of workers followed, but the employers eventually increased the wage offer.

An organiser of the NUTW, T. Colgien Mbali, was prosecuted for organising the strike. At his trial, three state witnesses were exposed as full-time spies for the Frame Group. One of them admitted he earned a bonus of R10 a week extra "in respect of my being an eye of the firm."

### Reprisals

Following the intensification of strike action by textile workers, particularly in the Natal area, the government stepped in and banned a number of union organisers in 1974. Further organisation and strikes in the Eastern Cape and Natal led to more bannings of organisers in November last year.

The textile industry is encountering the general economic crisis in South Africa. Far from providing jobs (as the government had hoped) to absorb masses of unemployed in the rural areas, the textile companies are laying off hundreds of workers. The employers are trying to protect their profits by speeding up work on the factory floor and squeezing wages.

We must resist the employers' offensive, by organising in every mill and factory across the land!