

WORKERS' UNITY

Organ of the South African Congress of Trade Unions

Issue No. 9, May 1978

Regime blames its own apartheid labour system in SECRET REPORT ON MINE VIOLENCE

The government's "Inter-Departmental Committee of Inquiry into Riots on Mines" was set up in March 1975. A year later, when questioned in Parliament, the Minister of Labour said that he was refusing to table the report because the contents were "in some respects of a sensitive nature."

It is now clear just what was "sensitive" about it.

★ *It states that the migrant labour system itself — the foundation of apartheid labour control — is to blame for the "riots".*

★ *It admits that the mining industry is "very vulnerable" in the face of mass action by the workers.*

★ *It concludes that black mine-workers are highly conscious politically, and "will co-operate to an increasing degree to realise their political aspirations."*

★ *It sets out detailed plans for cracking down on the black mine-workers and for meeting future workers' action with armed force.*

Racist and anti-worker

From the first page to the last, the report reveals the thoroughly racist and anti-worker attitudes of the Committee of Inquiry. Typical of this, and of the rubbish which fills much of the report, is the Committee's "theory" of the so-called "inclination to become violent" on the part of the "Southern Bantu tribes".

Of more interest to workers is the fact that even this Committee (which speaks of African mine-workers as "rabble") is forced to admit that the migrant labour system is the root cause of the uprisings on the mines.

Main aim of apartheid

One of the main aims of the government's apartheid policy is to uproot Africans from the urban areas and turn all African workers into migrant labourers. This means that they are forced to wait in the "Bantustans" until granted a "con-

tract" to work temporarily on the mines, the farms or in industry.

The migrant labour system (and the pass laws and compounds which go with it) is the method which the government and the bosses in South Africa use to keep the African workers in virtual slavery — to control their movements, to prevent them from organising, to keep wages down to starvation levels, and to deny them pensions and social welfare.

In past issues of "Workers' Unity" we have explained how the migrant labour system is the cornerstone of the oppression of Africans under apartheid.

Now the government's own Committee of Inquiry has had to recognise that it is this very system which is responsible for the violence on the mines.

"In our view," says the Committee, "it is the system of migratory labour, per se, that is creating the problem ..." (page 15 of the report).

End it?

Does the Committee recommend ending this system of migrant labour? Absolutely not! "There does not appear to be any practical alternative," it says.

No practical alternative for the bosses and their racist regime, that is. No alternative for those whose aim in life is to squeeze as much profit as possible out of the unpaid labour of the oppressed workers.

For the slave-owners in time past there certainly seemed to be "no practical alternative" to slavery. So it is today for the capitalists and their political representatives in South Africa. They can offer no alternative to the continuation of their own crimes.

For the workers, the "practical alternative" is to organise and mobilise to smash this system by force. By their militant action the African mineworkers in South Africa have shown that they are moving in that direction.

Between February 1973 and April 1975 a total of 140 people were killed and nearly 2000 injured in violent clashes involving workers, management and police on the South African mines. Government investigators were appointed to "inquire" into the causes of the mine "riots" and to recommend steps to prevent them. But the report from this inquiry has been kept secret by the regime and never published.

Now "Workers' Unity" has got hold of a copy of the secret report. In this issue we are printing extracts from the report to inform workers about the plans which have been made behind closed doors by the bosses and the government, to deal with the workers' struggle.



Out of the mines... into the compounds. That is life for more than half a million African mineworkers under the migrant labour system in South Africa.

"Riot" inquiry's plans for mine compounds

In the compounds, African mine-workers are forced to live as "bachelors" — cut off from their families, segregated from other workers, and constantly under the military-type discipline of indunas and compound managers.

According to the Committee of Inquiry, "the unusual and unnatural circumstances in which migrant workers find themselves in the compounds and hostels definitely contribute towards a feeling of insecurity and uncertainty and cause boredom and frustration which in turn may lead to their easily resorting to violence ..."

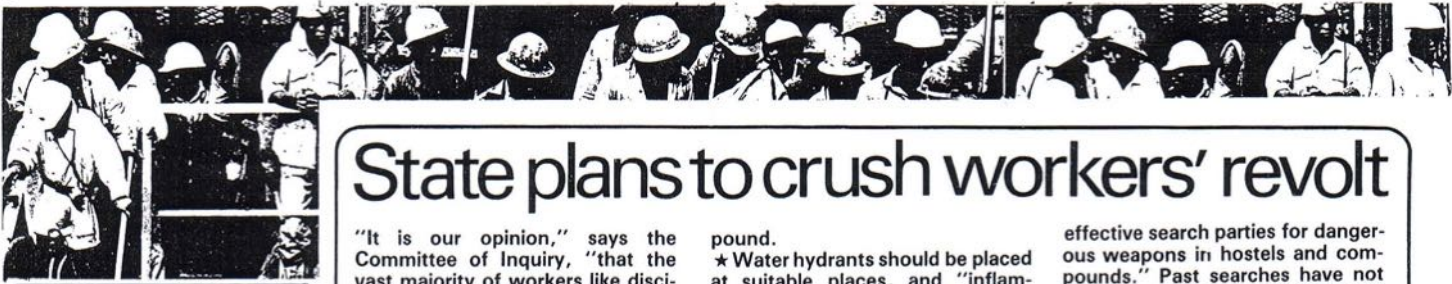
Compound life, says the report, "is not the sole cause" of violence. In other words ... it is one of the main causes. Once again, the government's own Committee cannot escape laying responsibility for 140 deaths and nearly 2000 injuries where it belongs — at the door of the bosses and their apartheid regime.

No intention

But here again, the Committee has no intention of recommending that

continued on page 2

Inside: more from government's secret report



Compounds...

continued from front page
the evil system be ended.

The compound system is one of the main methods for keeping up the exploitation of African mineworkers; of ensuring high profits for the capitalists around the world who own the South African mines. The Committee of Inquiry studied ways of making the system more efficient — of maintaining the strictest control over the workers without provoking them to violent revolt.

For this purpose, the report proposes both "soft" and "hard" measures. The soft measures are designed to drug the workers' rebelliousness and cool them off. The hard measures are the ones to be kept ready for use the instant that the workers revolt.

"Soft" measures

The report proposes that compounds be made smaller, with a maximum of 2000 workers each. It suggests that language groups be mixed within each compound (but not within each room). The idea of "ethnic blocks," or the whole compound consisting of one language group only, is rejected because "in the event of trouble or a riot, it is likely that the entire labour force will band together and the mine concerned will, therefore, be most vulnerable."

The Committee wants wives of workers to be allowed to visit them, and for quarters for visiting married women to be provided. "These will naturally need to be strictly controlled and visits can be limited to say seven or fourteen days," says the report.

Certain "key mineworkers" should be allowed to live in married quarters; but there should be "more police raids" to crack down on liquor and squatters. Actually, the Committee is not quite sure whether it is against shebeens — because these "bring about a measure of relief from frustration."

Loyal service

It is also suggested that "Bantu townships" under the control of the Bantu Administration Boards should be built in mining areas to house some married workers. "In this manner an attempt can be made to build up a source of labour with a tradition of sustained and loyal service to a mine."

The committee thinks that there should be more outlets for the energies of the compound workers over weekends, in sports, entertainments and doing "gardening" work for whites. It is also anxious to encourage religion.

"We realise that the average

State plans to crush workers' revolt

"It is our opinion," says the Committee of Inquiry, "that the vast majority of workers like discipline (!) and do not approve of strikes and riots ..." What are the facts?

In the period of intense unrest between 1973 and 1976, an estimated 60,000 African mineworkers broke off their "contracts" and demanded to leave the mines. Some mines lost more than half their workers; three mines alone lost more than 16,000 workers at one time.

Brutal shooting

In the report, the Committee does not raise a single word of criticism of the police for brutally shooting down workers. The Committee's concern is to make future armed action by police and mine security guards more effective, so as to maintain the order of exploitation and prevent the workers' resistance from disrupting production.

These are some of the measures it proposes:

- ★ Every mine should have a properly trained security unit equipped with patrol dogs, teargas, batons and, "where practicable, an armoured vehicle." Every unit should "also practice regularly with units from surrounding mines and with the S.A. police."

- ★ The compounds and hostels must have lighting "which can be controlled from the outside" and which cannot be put out of order by the workers.

- ★ Key buildings, such as administrative offices, etc., should be built on the edges of the compounds where they can be given "better protection".

- ★ Only one day's normal supply of liquor should be kept on the premises.

- ★ "All records and valuable documents should be kept in strong rooms."

Barricades

- ★ The compounds should not be built with materials which can be used to make barricades or weapons.

- ★ There should be a road going around and through the com-

pound. migrant labourer does not display much interest in religion," says the report, "but still it is felt that more can be done for him in this regard."

The Committee proposes that *indunas* should be elected by the workers, since they apparently no longer accept the "anomaly" that the *induna* is "the senior representative of his tribe and simultaneously its policeman!"

No trade unions

The idea of trade unions does not even enter the Committee's head. The apartheid regime's policy is that African workers are not

pound.

- ★ Water hydrants should be placed at suitable places, and "inflammable material must not be kept in the compounds or hostels."

- ★ Electricity should be used instead of coal, because the workers have used coal as ammunition in the uprisings.

- ★ Use should be made of special television equipment for the purpose of identifying "instigators". The Chamber of Mines is currently investigating this matter."

- ★ "There should be a proper fool-proof system of communication in case of emergency" [e.g. walkie-talkies and loudspeakers], and "rooms from which administrative management personnel can continue with safety to exercise control and see what is afoot."

Vigilance

- ★ "The vigilance of the mining authorities must be so keen that incidents or possible causes of riots immediately come to their attention and are, as far as possible, smothered at birth. It shall be the duty of management and the security unit to maintain order until the police arrive."

- ★ Special cells should be built outside the hostels to hold workers until the arrival of the police. (The report's polite term for this is "provision for incidental safe custodianship"!)

- ★ "There must be regular and

effective search parties for dangerous weapons in hostels and compounds." Past searches have not been thorough enough "judging by the number of weapons (many of them large and home-made)." Workers, says the report, "accept" searches. "In the process the mineworker has probably also learnt a thing or two, e.g. how to deceive the investigator."

Penalty clause

The Committee is very unhappy that the criminal penalties for contract-breaking were abolished in 1974. The report advises that future "contracts" should contain penalty clauses, ensuring that the workers are made to suffer if they leave the mines before their time is up.

It also proposes that "contracts" should be reduced from 18 months to 6 or 9 months.

"Inciters and instigators," says the report, "should, if possible, be summarily discharged after having been criminally charged and, in more serious cases, debarred from obtaining employment ever again on any mine. According to evidence the Chamber of Mines is busily engaged on investigating the possibility of a fully computerised fingerprint system whereby control will possibly be put into practice."

The Committee advises that "a central bureau should be brought into being so as to keep an effective black list."



At the service of the mine bosses: Special "riot" police, like those which have carried out the massacres in the townships, are now ready to deal with workers' resistance on the mines.

"ripe" for trade unions. In the case of African mineworkers, the Committee states that they "are not ripe" even for the regime's own liaison committee system!

The report proposes to reduce dissatisfaction by ensuring that minimum wages are the same on all mines, with differences in conditions adjusted by a bonus scheme. It favours a greater division of workers into higher and lower wage groups by means of "job evaluation".

The eventual aim, says the Committee, is the payment of wages that are "comparable with wages in industry." In this way they hope to

attract what they call "the more intelligent and responsible Black worker" to the mines.

(Average wages for African workers in industry are themselves below the breadline.)

Suppressing revolt

Having suggested a few minor reforms to smooth over some of the roughest edges of the system, the Committee turned its attention to "improving" the measures for suppressing revolt. It is clear from the amount of detail in this part of the report that this was the Committee's main concern.



Secret report warns regime on: **Workers' political aims**



The Committee of Inquiry came to the conclusion that African mine-workers have a high level of political awareness.

This undoubted fact must have been discovered by the Committee through spies and security police agents — because the workers themselves, wise to the ways of the regime, refused to help the inquiry. "Bantu witnesses," says the report, "were encouraged to talk freely by assuring them that the information given by them would be regarded as confidential.(!) With few exceptions, however, very little information concerning riots was gleaned from Bantu witnesses."

Africa and the world

This is what the Committee found: "... the Black worker is aware of what is going on around him, and of events elsewhere in Africa and in the World. He ... is becoming more and more aware of himself and the important part that he plays in the mining industry. He is aware of the enhanced gold price and that the industry is dependent on him and very vulnerable — seen from the labour point of view."

An example of the workers' awareness was their response to events in Mozambique. There was an attitude among workers "during times of Frelimo successes, that Frelimo was showing how to deal with Whites."

Said the Committee: "We must constantly bear in mind that the Black worker himself is very susceptible to communist influences and that everything possible has to be done to protect him from those influences."

B.O.S.S. and security police

Among the measures proposed for

"protecting" the workers from political influences are these:

"The Committee assumes that B.O.S.S. and the Security Division of the S.A. Police, are continually on the lookout for secret or underhand political activities which, in the nature of things, would not normally be disclosed at our investigations."

"We expect that with the passage of time (if it is not already happening), agitators (communist or otherwise) and terrorists from outside the country will attempt to be

Double agent

Sometimes, it seems, B.O.S.S. and the security police get caught in their own traps! The report mentions "a certain Daniel Ramotsetjoa, alias Mokimel, alias Kimberley" who "was definitely concerned with the riot in one of its (Anglo American's) compounds while apparently being employed by the State as an informer — and seemingly protected."

While calling for tougher police action, the Committee is worried that the workers see the police as



Inside the compound at Rand Mines' City Deep

absorbed as part of the migrant labour force taken up by the mines, and that the authorities are on their toes for such infiltration."

The report continues: "We feel that recruiting agents or organisations can play a tremendous part, in co-operation with the security sections of the mining industry and of the State, in picking recruits on a very strict footing."

agents of the bosses — "as a means to be utilised by mine management for the purpose of thwarting the orderly lodgement of protest by mineworkers."

The report goes on: "The appearance of the S.A. Police on the scene when discussions are proceeding in an orderly manner, e.g. the discussion of a rise in pay, is definitely undesirable and can do

more harm than good."

Action spreads

The Committee is also very worried that, when a strike or "riot" breaks out on one mine, it quickly spreads to others. "We read in the Press," says the Committee, "of conditions in the compounds and hostels, critical comment concerning the system of migratory labour and the handling of riots. All the problems with which mines have to contend are brought into the public eye and the Black workers become fully aware of the vulnerability of the mining industry."

To prevent this, the report proposes a tight clamp-down on publicity, both by the newspapers and the S.A.B.C. It may well be that, over the past two years, a veil of secrecy has already been drawn over the struggles of African workers on the mines.

Young workers lead

One of the most interesting findings of the Committee is that "according to evidence, it is especially the younger workers" who are affected by political developments. "We have repeatedly heard that young men tend to take the lead during riots."

Despite all the measures which the Committee suggests for preventing the growing political consciousness of the mineworkers, it is forced to recognise that the tide is flowing against the mine bosses and the regime.

"We must reasonably expect that as propaganda is stepped up, the Black workers, having their own problems, ideals and aspirations, will co-operate to an increasing degree to realise their political aspirations."

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS TO NELSON MANDELA, SERVING LIFE IMPRISON- MENT ON ROBBER ISLAND

To you, Comrade Nelson, SACTU extends congratulations and best wishes for your 60th birthday on 18th July.

The oppressed workers of South Africa recognize the great contribution which you have made as a national leader of the liberation movement, including the ingenious

"M-plan", which made the townships ours during the 1950s and 60s, and which is still as important today as it was then.

We believe that the African National Congress, as the leading force of the oppressed workers and people of South Africa, will continue to play the leading role in the liberation struggle.

Despite the fact that you are in chains, the courage and determination of yourself and all those with you in prison continue to inspire us in the movement today. In spite of the trials, harassments and isola-

tion in jail, you have stood determined.

We still draw courage from your words from the dock: "I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

John Gaetsewe
General Secretary



Nelson Mandela

Wage talks in the metal industry — OUR DEMANDS

The wage negotiations which are now taking place in the metal industry are very important, not only for the half-million metal workers, but for all industrial workers in South Africa. The re-organisation of jobs and wages which is being worked out there is likely to be followed in other industries as well.

The talks are taking place between the bosses and the unions of white, coloured and Indian workers (mainly skilled workers). The African workers, the vast majority of the workforce, are completely excluded from the negotiations which will decide their jobs and wages.

Background

If we consider the background to these negotiations, we will be able to understand the aims and tactics of the various groups involved.

The world crisis of the capitalist system has resulted everywhere in severe cut-backs in the metal industry. In South Africa, for example, all the major steel producers are working at only 60% of their productive capacity, except for Iscor which, because it is linked to the government, has kept production up to 80%. The tube-making sector is also working at 60% of capacity; and the demand for electrical cables has fallen by a half since 1976 because of the slump in the building industry.

The crisis has this result: The employers in the industry are faced with a sharp fall in profits. Some are operating at a loss. *Their aim is to push up profits by forcing wages down.* They want to put the burden of the failure of their own capitalist system onto the shoulders of the workers.

Increase exploitation

The bosses' aim is to increase the exploitation of the workers. Because they do not have the power simply to reduce wages *directly* (the workers would rise up in revolt), they are using an indirect method.

Their plan is to employ African workers to do more skilled work — but without paying them the wages of skilled workers. In this way the bosses can reduce the total amount of wages paid for a certain amount of work.

It is for this reason that the present negotiations with the registered unions (which exclude Africans) are centred on the employers' demand for the ending of job reservation and the colour bar in the industry.

This enables the bosses to present themselves as liberals — in favour of "ending discrimination"; in favour of "advancing Africans", etc. While they argue for "equality", we know that they do it out of naked greed — in this case a desire for cheap skilled labour to replace expensive skilled labour.

SACTU demands the complete outlawing of all discrimination, in the metal industry and in the whole

WAGES IN THE 1977 AGREEMENT

Below are the wage rates agreed between the metal employers and the registered unions in 1977. By defining similar work into different grades, with huge wage differences between them, the agreement allows the bosses to use African workers in some skilled jobs while continuing to pay them headline wages

AFRICAN WORKERS ARE EXCLUDED FROM RATES "A" TO "D"

Job	Rate	Wage for a 45-hour week
Boilermakers, electricians and other artisans	A	R98.10
Skilled machinists who set machines	AA	R85.05
Supervisors of operatives	B	R70.65
Operatives: welders, crane drivers, etc.	C	R68.85
Operatives: repetition welding	D	R66.60
semi-automatic work	DD	R51.30
repetition work	DDD	R41.40
General workers: metal sprayers	E	R37.35
supervisors of general workers	F	R31.95
workers on automatic machinery	G	R28.35
boiler attendants, cleaners, etc.	H	R26.55

In practice, whenever a job is done by an African, it is arbitrarily re-labelled so as to pay the worker at a lower rate.

In most advanced capitalist countries, general workers earn about 80% of the wages of skilled workers. In apartheid industry in South Africa they earn only 27% of skilled wages.

In 1975, black workers in the metal industry earned only one-third of the total wages paid — yet they made up two-thirds of the total number of workers. In the industry, the average white wage is R161 per week. The average African wage is approximately one-fifth of this.

of society. We demand free technical training facilities for all workers and equal access by all to all types of work.

Colour bar

For decades the industrial colour bar, backed up by job reservation, has been the method used for maintaining the privileged position of white workers, and through this their support for the bosses and the apartheid regime. Skilled white workers (to whose ranks some coloured and Indian workers have been added) have been guaranteed higher wages and job security by means of excluding Africans from competing with them for skilled work.

But the stage has been reached where the capitalists "can't afford racial discrimination any more," as a spokesman for the metal employers put it. *They can't afford to keep cheap African labour out of skilled jobs.*

For several years now the process of gradually admitting Africans to skilled work has been going on with the consent of the registered unions. They have not allowed Africans in *directly*, for example to do the same job next to a white worker for a lower wage. The process has taken place *indirectly*, through splitting up the skilled jobs into different operations and re-grading them.

African workers have been employed to do some skilled operations at low wages, while white, coloured and Indian skilled workers have been paid much higher wages for doing the others.

Crane driving

Sometimes only minor changes in classification are made — with big

changes in the wages paid. One of the best examples of this — of how the employers reduce wages in the metal industry — is shown in the job of crane driving.

In the present agreement there are five definitions for crane driving which range from driving a crane which is handling molten metal to operating a crane which is fixed in one place. Today the most difficult jobs on cranes in the docks and on building sites are being done by African workers.

At one engineering factory in the Transvaal, an employer wanted to replace white workers on an over-



White worker or black? The job may be the same but the wages will be vastly different.

head crane. The metal agreement did not allow him to put African workers on a crane which had a cab — so he simply removed the protective cab and made African workers work without proper protection for the lowest wage grade!

This is the kind of thing which is happening on a large scale in all metal factories. African workers are doing welding, machining, drilling, riveting, grinding and many other types of skilled work — and being systematically underpaid.

Employers' demands

In the present negotiations, the employers are demanding that the registered unions representing the white, coloured and Indian skilled workers must agree to a major regrading of jobs. They are saying to the unions: "If you don't let us use cheap African labour for more skilled work, it will mean an end to our profits — and then how will we be able to pay you your higher wages?"

The registered unions cannot answer these arguments. They are in a trap — the logical result of having turned their backs on the mass of the workers for so many years. Their weakness today is the outcome of their long-standing collaboration with the capitalists. They have tied themselves to the bosses' system and its preservation.

For half a century they have benefitted from their betrayal of the African workers. Now they are beginning to pay the price.

They now find themselves having to retreat and "make sacrifices" to save the bosses' rotten system from a collapse which threatens to fall on them as well! But in time, as the crisis of the economy deepens, *they will not be able to save themselves from direct attacks by the bosses on their wages and living standards.*

We say

Only the organised power of the African workers, in independent unions open to all workers, can defend the workers' interests against the attacks of the bosses. But ultimately, security for all workers can only be guaranteed when we (together with our allies in the liberation movement) can overpower the bosses, take over production and organise it to meet the needs of the people.

In the negotiations in the metal industry, the skilled workers' unions find themselves in a very weak position. Their hold over the industry has been slipping as jobs have been split up and new machinery has taken the place of many of their skills. The proportion of skilled labour in the workforce is declining. They can no longer confidently rely on the government to take their side against the greed of the bosses, and shelter them from competition with Africans.

Their weakness explains why they are agreeing to negotiate a relaxation of job reservation and the colour bar at a time when many of their own members are already unemployed.

The tactic of the registered,

continued on page 5.

Metal industry...

continued from page 4

unions in the negotiations is to press for a big wage increase in the highest grades, and to insist on "the rate for the job". By this they do not mean equal pay for equal work. They are willing to go along with the system of job-splitting and artificial regrading to hide the fact that Africans are paid low wages for doing substantially the same work.

All that the registered unions mean by "the rate for the job" is no under-cutting within the same official grade.

Members warned

These unions have no illusions about the aims of the bosses. The General Secretary of the Boilermakers' Society, B. Brouwer, has warned his members: "Make no mistake, when the opportunity comes to replace you and your expensive skills with a bright new machine and an operator who will work for peanuts, he won't think twice about getting rid of you."

In the present negotiations, the registered unions are mainly relying on the employers' fear of any big upheaval, such as a strike, which would spill over and set the African workers in motion.

At times like this, the registered unions are inclined to "rediscover" the African workers. They are now talking again about organising African workers "to increase the

wages of Africans in order to remove the ever present threat of cheap labour which hangs over our heads at every wage negotiation."

It is out of this that schemes like "parallel unions" for Africans are born. The registered unions have the secret wish to control the African workers' organisations — so that they can be used in bargaining with the employers, without being allowed to "get out of hand".

The real attitude of the leaders of the skilled workers towards African workers is shown in the agreements they conclude with the bosses. The present proposals put forward by the registered metal unions will mean at best a pathetic increase of only R4 in the wages of the lowest paid workers.

These "leaders" know that the system in South Africa depends on the exploitation of cheap black labour — and they are doing their best to prop that system up.

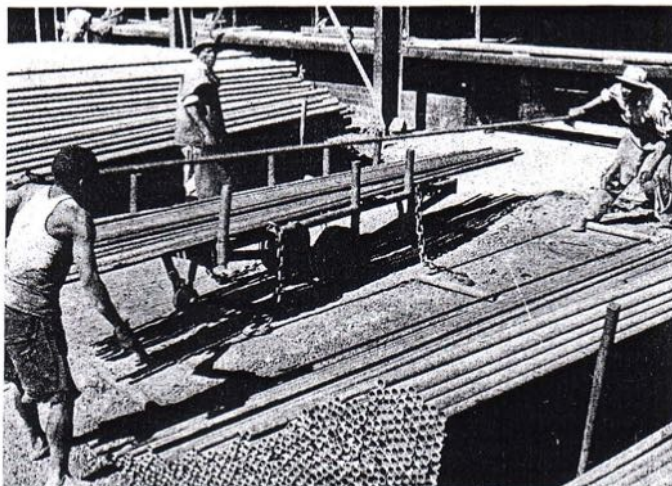
The future

There is no future for the workers of South Africa in registered unions under the Industrial Conciliation Act. There is no future in exclusive unions based on skill.

All the workers in the metal industry should be represented in one national union based on the mass of the workers, the Africans, and open to all.

Build the independent union of the metal workers!

Fight for a united programme of demands!



African workers are excluded from the wage talks. What's in the pipeline for them?

*For a national minimum wage of R50 for a 40-hour week!

*For reasonable differentials in the wages of skilled workers, on a single wage scale agreed among all the workers before any negotiations with the bosses! No separate bargaining with the bosses by skilled workers, or by workers of different races!

*Automatic future increases for all workers, linked to price rises!

*Abolish all discrimination on the basis of race or sex, in jobs, wages, and working conditions!

*Equal pay for equal work!

*No redundancies! Work-sharing with no loss of pay!

*Technical training for all workers to be paid for by the employers!

NEXT ISSUE

More on the metal industry:
 — the changing structure of the industry;
 — conditions at work;
 — the new Iscor compound (a boss's dream);
 — the struggle of the African metal workers against the apartheid labour system.

Black workers in South Africa are fighting with great determination and militancy against increasing unemployment, shrinking pay packets and ill-treatment on the job — as is shown by recent strike action in many parts of the country.

The signs are that a new wave of wage-strikes may be beginning.

Epol workers strike

In March, about 120 workers at the Epol factory in Vereeniging went on strike over ill-treatment by a foreman. The workers (truck drivers and lorry crew members) demanded the removal of the transport manager who, they claimed, had

★unfairly sacked a number of

workers, some without reasons being given;

★docked their wages and refused to pay overtime pay;

★placed unreasonable demands on them, getting them to work harder so as to increase productivity.

Management issued an ultimatum to the striking workers — either to return to work or be fired. About half of those on strike returned, and management then

referred the grievances to the management-controlled liaison committee for "discussion".

7000 black miners strike

About 7000 black underground workers at Blyvooruitzicht Gold mine went on strike in early April for higher pay. Management promised wage increases of from R1 to R5 per week for workers in differ-

ent grades. No sooner had the underground workers returned to work than about 2000 black surface workers came out on strike to ensure they received an increase as well. They returned to work after management agreed to look into their pay and conditions.

WRAB sack 300 strikers

More than 300 black refuse collectors of the West Rand Administration Board were sacked after having stopped work over pay demands in April. The workers had asked to be paid one week before their actual pay day, and went on strike when the WRAB refused to consider it. They were all fired, and about 300 migrant workers were brought in to replace them.

Transport workers strike

Black workers at the Transtorage transport company in the East Rand struck for higher pay in March. They complained that they were paid less than workers in Thorntons Transport, which, like Transtorage, is a subsidiary of United Transport. For example, Transtorage labourers were getting R20,50 per week by comparison to Thornton labourers' R30 per week. Drivers' wages per week were R41 and R56 respectively. Workers ended the strike when management agreed to negotiate.

In a Vereeniging transport company, MPA Transport, twenty workers went on strike for higher pay. Management sacked all of them and employed new workers to replace them.

Strike action is increasing

ISITHEBE STRIKE HITS 28 FIRMS

Over 1000 workers in the Isithebe area of the Kwa Zulu Bantustan went on a two-day strike in February over bad wages and working conditions. Their main grievances were that

★they were not entitled to sick-leave pay;

★African workers were paid less than Indian and Coloured workers for doing the same work. Some African workers were earning R6,50 per week, and they demanded that the minimum wage paid should be at least R12;

★some firms were not adopting the correct procedure to make workmen's compensation claims.

The strike crippled all 28 factories in the Isithebe area. Workers stop-

ped buses and cars coming to work in the early morning, urging the passengers to join the strike. Police with tear gas and dogs were brought in to disperse the crowds of workers who gathered. A negotiating team was appointed to raise the workers' grievances with the employers, with the Kwa-Zulu government representative as mediator.

Wage talks collapsed, and 1000 strikers stoned a government-owned beer hall. Police intervened again, and eventually workers were forced to return to work, under the surveillance of police in camouflage uniform who patrolled the area.

The employers in Isithebe are very reluctant to give into workers'

demands for higher wages. The only reason they invest in the Bantustan areas is because of the very low wages they are able to pay. In one clothing factory in Isithebe, management sacked 90 seamstresses rather than concede to their wage demand. But the workers have demonstrated by their militancy that they will not tolerate these low wages, and are prepared to use force to make their point clear!

The task of Kwa Zulu workers, as for black workers everywhere is to organize trade unions. The organized strength and unity of the workers is the only way we can achieve better wages and working conditions.

'Hard, painstaking work' needed to build trade unions

—SACTU President tells anniversary meeting



Speakers at the meeting were (left to right): Rashidi Utukulu of JUWATA, Tanzania; Stephen Dlamini (President of SACTU); Aron Pemba (Chairman of SACTU Secretariat); and Reddy Mazimba (ANC Chief Representative in Dar es Salaam).

ANC stresses vital role of SACTU

Addressing the meeting on behalf of the African National Congress, comrade Reddy Mazimba said that the ANC fully recognised the vital role of SACTU in the liberation struggle. "We shall always maintain our alliance, which is a source of strength for both our organisations."

He explained that our task in South Africa will not be an easy one. "We not only have to overthrow the hated yoke of oppression, but after that we also have to build a new and just society. Both these tasks, national liberation and social reconstruction, cannot be achieved without an organised working class. The workers of South Africa are our main striking force!"

"We have 8 million industrialised workers, seven million of whom are black. That is our real army! We have learnt from history, particularly from the victorious socialist revolution of 1917, that the working class not only liberates itself, but the rest of humanity as well. This is common sense.

"It is not enough to destroy the old, we also have to build the new. Who are the builders? Who are the creators of all wealth, who man the machines, who run the trains, the ships, the planes? Who are they who till the land, who load and unload, who make the wheels of the world go round? It is the working people. But the workers have to be organised to carry out their role in society, they must be able to act in their thousands in a collective, disciplined way. That is why the South African Congress of Trade Unions plays such an important role in our South African revolution."

SACTU at WFTU Congress

A SACTU delegation participated in the 9th Congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions in April this year.

Stephen Dlamini, our President, presided over one of the many sessions and spoke to the Congress about our struggles in South Africa. SACTU took its place on the General Council together with the Secretaries and Presidents of the other national federations.

Caution

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

In a resolution, the Congress reaffirmed "its full support and its active solidarity with the workers and peoples of Southern Africa who struggle in every possible way to put an end to the regimes of racial segregation in this part of the world."

It stressed the need for "united action by the three International Trade Union Centres and the OATUU to combat apartheid, racism in all its forms."

The resolution called upon all trade union centres "to mobilise working people of the world against the involvement of trans-national corporations with the racist minority regimes, which deny the inalienable rights of the peoples of that region to independence and their right to dispose of their natural wealth in the best interest of the people."

Public meetings to mark the 23rd anniversary of the founding of SACTU on 5th March 1955, were held in London and Dar es Salaam.

Speaking in Dar es Salaam, Stephen Dlamini, the President of SACTU, said that "the workers of South Africa have learnt to know their own strength, their own power, so much so that when the call goes out today for action, the workers no longer respond in small groups, but in their tens of thousands." Proof of this was the great strike wave of 1973 and 1974, and again the highly effective general strikes in many parts of the country after the Soweto events in 1976.

Banner flies high

"Despite the bloody suppression of our organisations, the imprisonment of our leaders, the bans, house-arrests, torture and killings, with which the racist regime is trying to hold back the birth of a new society, the banner of trade unionism still flies high in South Africa," he said.

"Young workers are flocking to the movement to fill the places of the imprisoned, killed or exiled leaders. New trade unions are being formed, and many more will be formed, because the workers have 'realised their potential', as the Chairman at our first Congress prophesied."

Plans for exploitation

"But the workers are not the only ones who have realised their potential. The big capitalists and their Executive Committee, the South African racist regime, have also realised that the unity of the workers is a grave danger to their continued plans for exploitation of the workers.

"They know that once the working people unite for the final battle for their freedom, the rule of the boss class will soon be ended. So they repress, restrict and persecute the leaders of the workers. But the boss class have many other tricks up their sleeve. They try to split the workers by racialist propaganda; they try to sow ideological confusion in their ranks; they try to form all kinds of fake and subterfuge organisations; they try to buy off the leaders of some unions with privileges and inducements." Among the tricks of the boss class are "parallel unions", "liaison committees" and "company unions" — all attempts to bring the trade union movement under the control of the bosses and their agents.

On guard

"We must be on constant guard against these tricks," comrade Dlamini continued. "We must work even harder than ever before to strengthen the independence of the trade unions. We must do all in our power to create new levels of leadership and in doing so, we must keep in mind that the enemy is waiting to see who will emerge as

new leaders in order to wipe them out.

"We must train new cadres of leaders not to be detected by the enemy. We must beware of informers and of the vast network of agents in the factories. We must counter the treachery and trickiness of the enemy by being more clever than he, by developing new forms of organisation, new ideas of struggle.

"We must think deeply and long, how to outwit the enemy, how to frustrate his plans, how to advance the interests of the workers with the minimum of losses and sacrifice."

Without fear and hesitation

"But we must not think that we can achieve this without struggle or sacrifices. We must be ready, literally, to face the utmost dangers without fear and without hesitation, when the time demands it. This we can learn from our young people, from the new generation of fighters which has grown up in recent years.

"This fearless generation have realised that they have nothing to lose but their chains. Their courage must be directed and organised, so that it is not lost in wild, spontaneous outbursts, but in well planned and sustained actions, designed to shake the very foundations of the racist structure and to bring it tumbling down."

Above all

"Above all, we must learn that slogan shouting is not enough. What we need is hard, painstaking, slogging and methodical work. Organising trade unions means careful planning, checking up on decisions, following up every advantage gained and keeping our eyes open for opportunities and loopholes which the struggle presents."

Comrade Dlamini said that this was best illustrated by the history of the Mine Workers' Union during the 1940s. "The comrades in charge of this work, under the leadership of comrade J.B. Marks, were planning their attack for more than two years before they struck. Organisers were infiltrated in nearly every compound on nearly every mine.

"Every weekend, delegates from different mines met with the Committee, discussed the grievances of the miners and worked out the best methods of organising. They often met till the early hours of the morning. Open and secret methods were used to hold meetings with the miners everywhere ...

"This persistent, hard work resulted later in the most courageous, the most brilliant chapter in the history of Africa's mine workers: the great Mine Workers' Strike of August 1946, which put the fear of God into the capitalists.

"That is what we mean when we say, less slogan shouting and more hard work!" said comrade Dlamini.