

FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



April 1982



DELEGATES at FOSATU's second national congress sing a workers' song before starting a new debating session.

Congress gives a new Delegates spell out policy on unity, politics lead

FOSATU is facing the future with renewed strength and confidence following its second national congress held at Hammanskraal earlier this month.

A total of 135 delegates representing almost 100,000 workers met for the first time since FOSATU was formed to discuss progress made during the past three years and to lay down new policy directives.

KEYNOTE SPEECH

One of the highlights of the congress was a keynote address by general secretary Joe Foster in which he analysed the workers' struggle in South Africa and examined the role FOSATU should play.

He argued that a real working class movement with a clear political direction should be developed and that FOSATU should play a leading role in bringing this about (see page 3).

Delegates received the speech with acclaim and adopted it as a guideline to FOSATU policy.

Congress also ruled that the speech should be released as a public document and that it should be discussed by shop stewards and members in the factories.

Key points made in the speech were reflected in several important decisions taken by delegates.

UNITY PROGRAMME

In one resolution, congress

reaffirmed FOSATU's commitment to build a united working class movement in South Africa and to unite with other non-racial trade unions to achieve this.

It also spelled out a detailed programme for starting unity talks with other worker organisations.

However, congress made it clear that FOSATU would not accept any form of unity and that a united workers' organisation would have to be disciplined, non-racial and democratic.

POLITICAL RIGHTS

In another resolution, congress fully committed FOSATU to the struggle for the political emancipation of workers, and said it would continue efforts to organise workers into one movement so that an effective organ for change can be created.

While FOSATU would not affiliate to any party political organisation, it would also take part in community campaigns aimed at winning political and other rights for workers in a way which would strengthen the working class movement.

However, congress said, it would only do so after discussion with its members and when all the organisations taking part in such campaigns have agreed on their aims.

CONSTITUTION

Congress also amended FOSATU's constitution to improve its structure

in the light of experience gained over the past three years, and to provide for more worker participation in decision-making at all levels within the organisation.

Delegates debated the industrial council system and industry-wide bargaining but time ran out and the various proposals were referred back to the membership for further discussion before the next central committee meeting.

DELEGATE

The keynote speech was followed by an intensive date on the workers' struggle.

Delegates put forward different opinions but expressed a common commitment to the struggle for workers' rights, and a renewed

determination to promote worker organisation.

Also, it was clear that the address had started a process of discussion within FOSATU which will help workers to further clarify future policies.

One delegate said: 'The struggle stretches far before us — but we are committed, and whatever happens we will keep on keeping on.'

Another said: 'Years have gone by in the struggle and many organisations have perished. However, I hope that FOSATU will endure.'

'If the trade union movement can unite, we can liberate everyone in South Africa.'

He argued that workers should work together and use their unity, and added:

'I'm happy that we have a body like FOSATU so that we can control our lives. We must tell all workers how good this has been, and we must make them aware that we are with them and what our struggle is.'

CONFIDENCE

Another said: 'When we leave this congress, we must go to workers and conscientise them. We must help them to be proud of themselves and to have confidence in themselves.'

'As shop stewards, we have to represent workers — but if you represent yourself as a slave, it is difficult to represent workers.'

'The solution is to help workers kill the slave in themselves — but first, we must kill the slaves in ourselves.'

'Congress was a great success'

CHRIS Dlamini, national president of FOSATU, has expressed great satisfaction about the outcome of the second national congress.

'All the resolutions passed were progressive and constructive,' he said. 'If they can be implemented — and it is part of my task to see that they are — they can only mean progress for FOSATU and serve the interest of all members.'

'FOSATU is moving in the right

direction and taking up all the challenges facing workers in South Africa.'

Chris added: 'I am also very satisfied with the congress' decision on unity. It clearly spells out how meaningful unity can be achieved.'

'Up to now, discussion at the solidarity committees have been unsatisfactory. Their structures have been too loose and because of this no constructive decisions could

be taken.

'Now, our delegates have been given a definite structure in terms of which to work and which can be used to monitor progress.'

Bro. Dlamini added: 'Progress towards our goal of unity will now depend on whether the other unions will approach unity talks in the same constructive way.'

Congress votes for unity

IN an important move, delegates at the second national congress committed FOSATU to building a united working class movement and to unite with other non-racial trade unions.

Congress also took a major step forwards by spelling out a detailed programme for working towards unity — and said it was willing to dissolve FOSATU if this would help to achieve unity.

In a resolution adopted by congress, FOSATU pointed out that it was formed to bring about unity among all workers in South Africa, and has built up unity from the shop floor upwards over the past three years.

Also, congress said, many other democratic non-racial unions were now expressing interest in solidarity and unity with the non-racial union movement as a whole.

PROGRAMME

It therefore voted to continue building up a united working class movement and to discuss unity with other unions on the basis of the following programme:

- FOSATU will seek out worker organisations which broadly agree with its policies.
- It will move closer to them by discussing FOSATU's policies and positions with them.
- FOSATU will then begin to discuss with them how disciplined unity should be achieved.
- It will then draft constitutions for a new body together with these organisations.
- FOSATU will then plan to merge existing unions with others and to form joint organisations.

Constitution changed:

More power for workers

FOSATU has thoroughly reviewed its structure at its second national congress and has made some important changes to its constitution.

The review, which took up almost a day, was aimed at adapting FOSATU's structure in the light of experience gained during the past three years, and to ensure effective worker participation in decision-making at all levels within the organisation.

NATIONAL LEVEL

At national level, congress created the new post of national treasurer. The treasurer, who must be a worker, will take over financial responsibilities from the general secretary.

The national executive committee will be enlarged to include more elected worker representatives from each region.

REGIONAL LEVEL

The regional councils will now become regional congresses and will be larger, more representative bodies with more powers to take decisions about regional affairs.

Up to now, unions were restricted to a maximum number of delegates at regional level. These restrictions have now been removed so that workers in all unions will be equally represented at the regional congresses.

LOCAL LEVEL

The constitution was also changed to provide for better organisation at local level.

This will allow more workers to take part in FOSATU decision-making.

Up to now, the constitution has not provided for shop stewards' councils, which already exist.

This has now been rectified and

However, congress made it clear that FOSATU will not accept any form of unity and that a united movement will have to be disciplined, non-racial and democratic.

GUIDELINES

This was in line with guidelines set out by Joe Foster in his keynote speech when he said that the union movement could unite in different ways.

One kind of unity was the present form where separate unions and organisations try to take common stands on certain issues.

But this could only achieve anything on specific issues and would eventually become ineffective without more permanent organisational links.

Organisations could remain independent but try to set up permanent forms of contact. While organisations would be more closely linked, taking joint decisions would remain difficult.

Unions could also unite in a loose federation such as TUCSA but such a body would not be based on clear principles and would not lead to real unity either.

DISCIPLINE

What was needed was disciplined unity where unions would be linked closely together in one organisation in which policies would be binding on all unions, he said.

Joe said FOSATU should take unity very seriously and work out a programme for achieving it.

He also warned: "We should not hesitate to attack those who are impeding the development of a working class movement."

shop stewards' councils will play an important role at local level in future.

The councils will consist of all shop stewards as well as union branch executive committee members in local areas.

The councils will elect office bearers and have been empowered to establish local executive committees.

These local organisations will now be formally linked to other FOSATU structures and will be represented at regional level.

New office bearers elected

CHRIS Dlamini, chairman of the Transvaal region, has been elected as FOSATU's new national president.

Chris, who takes over from Johnny Mke, was among several new national office bearers elected at FOSATU's second national congress.

Andrew Zulu, also president of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU), was elected as national vice-president.

Nathaniel Gantana was elected to the new post of national treasurer and Joe Foster, who has acted as general secretary, following the resignation of Alec Erwin last year, was unanimously elected as general secretary.

LONG EXPERIENCE

Chris has had long experience in FOSATU and trade unions. He has served as chairman of his union, The Sweet, Food and Allied Workers' Union (SFAWU), is chairman of the Transvaal region and also serves on

FOSATU's central committee.

As chairman of the Kelloggs shop steward's committee, he was involved in negotiating the first agreement between an unregistered union and a company in the Transvaal, and the second of its kind in South Africa.

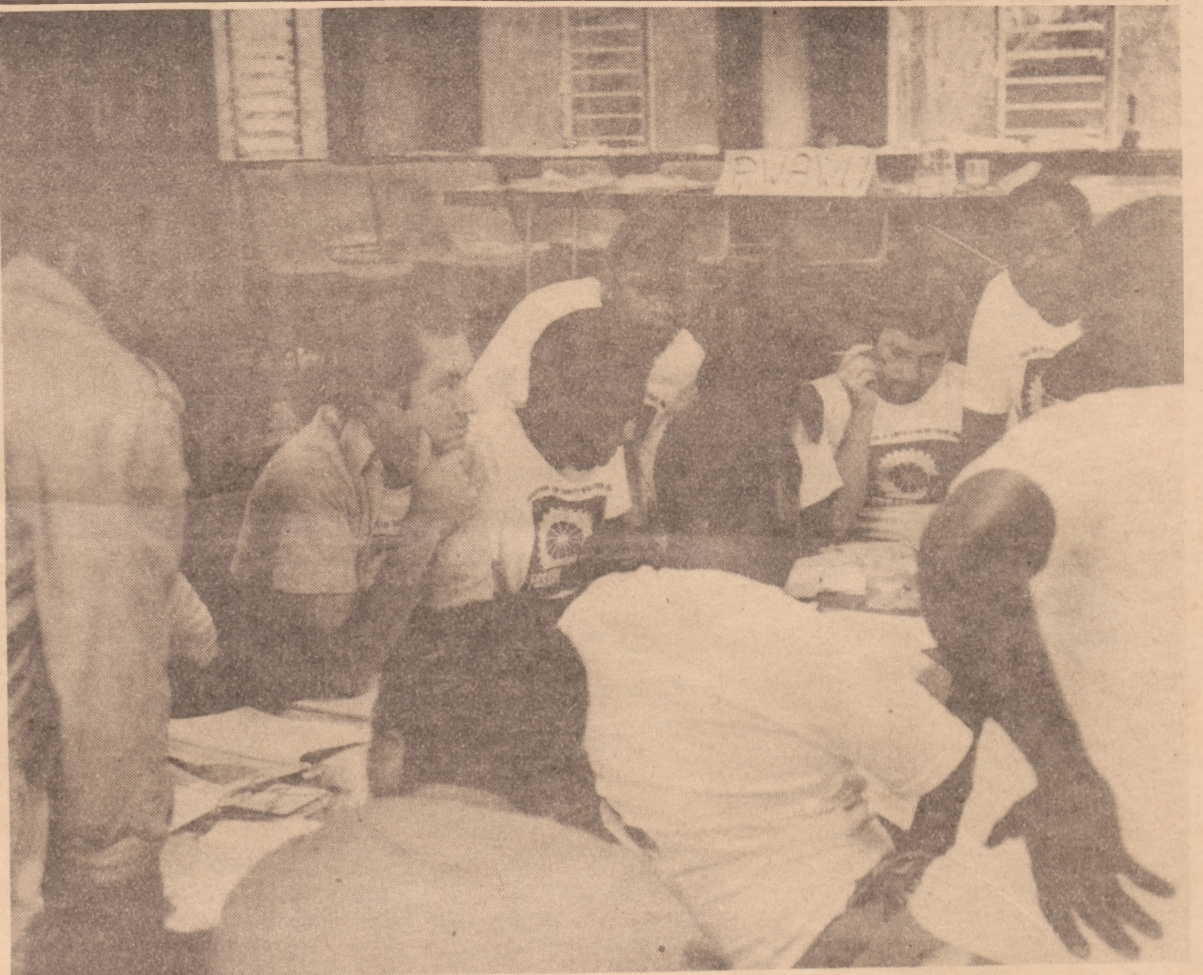
In his first address to congress, Bro. Dlamini said his election was a privilege and the struggle for workers' rights demanded that he should serve.

He also thanked the outgoing president, Bro. Mke, for his leadership through FOSATU's first three years.

BRANCH CHAIRMAN

Andrew Zulu has been MAWU's Transvaal branch chairman for the past three years and has served on the regional executive and the central committee.

He is a shop steward in his factory, Stonestreet and Hanson, where he has led negotiations over the past three years.



DELEGATES at FOSATU's second national congress in earnest discussion between sessions.

Fosatu spells out its political policy

IN one of the main resolutions adopted at congress, FOSATU committed itself to the struggle for workers' rights in all spheres, including their political emancipation.

Congress spelled out FOSATU's political policy after the keynote address by the general secretary, Joe Foster, in which he examined the political role FOSATU should play.

WORKER ROLE

Bro. Foster made it clear that the role of worker organisation was fundamentally political and that the workers' movement should contribute to the wider political struggle.

At the same time, he said, there were different political groups in the community and it was impossible for FOSATU to ally itself with all these groups, or to ally itself with one particular group.

Both paths, he said, would destroy the unity of worker organisation. However, this did not mean that FOSATU did not want to be involved in politics.

"Our very existence is political and we welcome that," he said.

Three resolutions were submitted to congress to help it to determine FOSATU's political position.

Eventually, congress committed FOSATU to the following political policy:

MAJORITY RULE

FOSATU believes that all the people of South Africa should take part in decision-making about the country's affairs, and reiterates its support for a democracy based on one man one vote and majority rule.

It rejects the homelands policy of the South African government which strips South Africans of their citizenship and turns them into foreigners in the country of their birth.

FOSATU believes that wealth should be democratically produced and equally distributed.

However, the majority of workers are forced to live and work in conditions that are either politically democratic nor economically equal, which results in poverty, hardship and social deprivation.

POLITICAL STAND

In the last five years, as the powers of unions have grown, pressures have been exerted on them to take a political stand.

FOSATU believes that any organisation of workers to fight for a more just society will not succeed unless they are united through effective organisation on the factory floor.

FOSATU will not affiliate to any party political organisation but will engage in struggles to secure a better standard of living, social justice and the political emancipation of workers in the community, where members of its affiliates live.

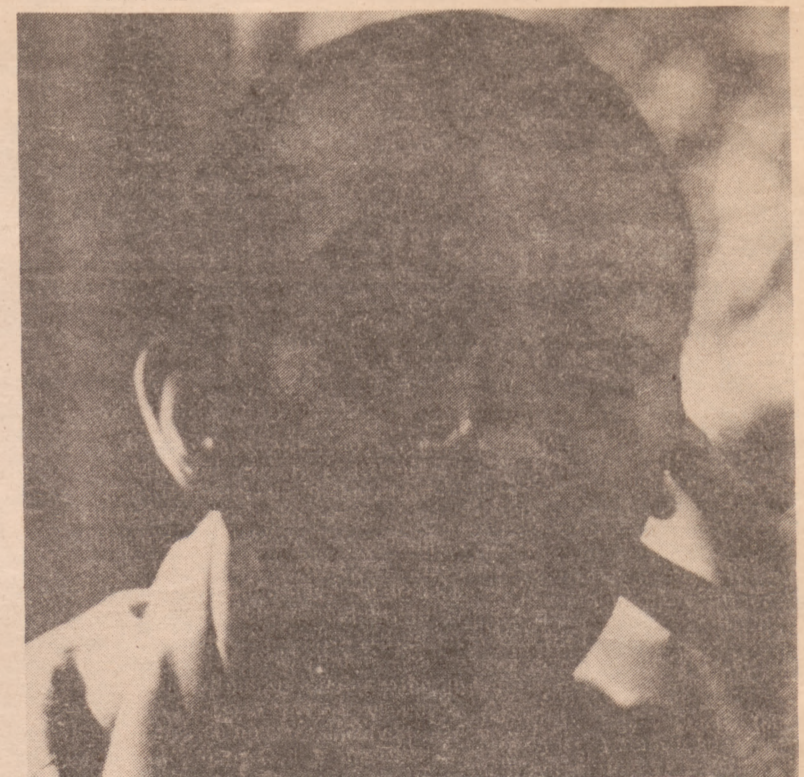
FOSATU will therefore continue its efforts to organise all workers into one movement so that an effective organ for change can be created.

It will take part in campaigns aimed at establishing a more just society in such a way that the working class movement is strengthened.

DEMOCRACY

However, it will do so only after thorough discussion with members at grass roots level to ensure that democracy is not merely spoken but also acted upon.

It will also only take part in such campaigns when all the participants have achieved unity of purpose and aims.



Chris Dlamini, Fosatu's new national president.

Bro. Gantana is chairman of the Western Cape branch of the National Automobile and Allied Workers' Union (NAAWU), and was president of the WP Motor

Assembly Workers' Union before it merged into NAAWU.

He has also served on the WP regional committee and the central committee.

'We must build a real worker movement'

FOSATU had achieved a great deal over the past three years, Bro. Foster said.

Membership had grown, worker militancy had increased and large industrial unions had been established.

But an even greater achievement was FOSATU's willingness to be self-critical and to re-evaluate its policies to meet the challenges of the future.

The major task facing FOSATU, he argued, was to create a working class movement in South Africa with a clear political direction. This movement still remained to be built.

Until now, worker organisation had been small and weakly organised both nationally and in the factories.

Although there had been widespread militancy and strikes in recent years, a really large and stable worker organisation did not yet exist.

Also, most workers did not clearly identify themselves in their daily lives and in their political actions as part of the working class.

"Strikes and protests do not in themselves mean that a working class movement exists. These are more than that — they are large-scale organisations with a social and political identity," Joe said.

"Workers must build a powerful and effective movement to advance their interests — but they must also ensure that this movement is able to take a clear political direction."

ONE of the highlights of FOSATU's second national congress was a keynote speech by general secretary Joe Foster in which he dealt with the workers' struggle in South Africa. Here is a summary.

REPRESSIVE RULE

At the same time, he said, the vast majority of South Africa's population had been subject to repressive minority rule.

Under these circumstances, it was natural that the progressive trade union movement became part of the popular struggle against oppression.

But while this battle was being fought between apartheid and its opponents, the capitalist economy was becoming stronger and more prosperous every day.

As a result, a new and different situation had arisen and a large and potentially powerful working class had been concentrated in huge factories and townships.

The power of the large employers had rapidly grown as they became concentrated in monopolies. This, in turn, increased the need for workers to develop more effective organisation.

These developments, Joe said, have created favourable conditions for a working class movement to develop in South Africa — but this did not mean it would happen automatically.

LITTLE EXPERIENCE

So far, union struggles have been

mostly against isolated companies and there has been little experience of wider struggles in a whole industry or throughout the country.

Workers and their leaderships have therefore not experienced the strength of large-scale worker organisation and lack the confidence this would have created, he said.

As a result, they see their role as part of a wider struggle but are unclear about the political tasks of the worker struggle itself.

However, Joe said, the popular political movements could not deal with the fundamental problems of workers.

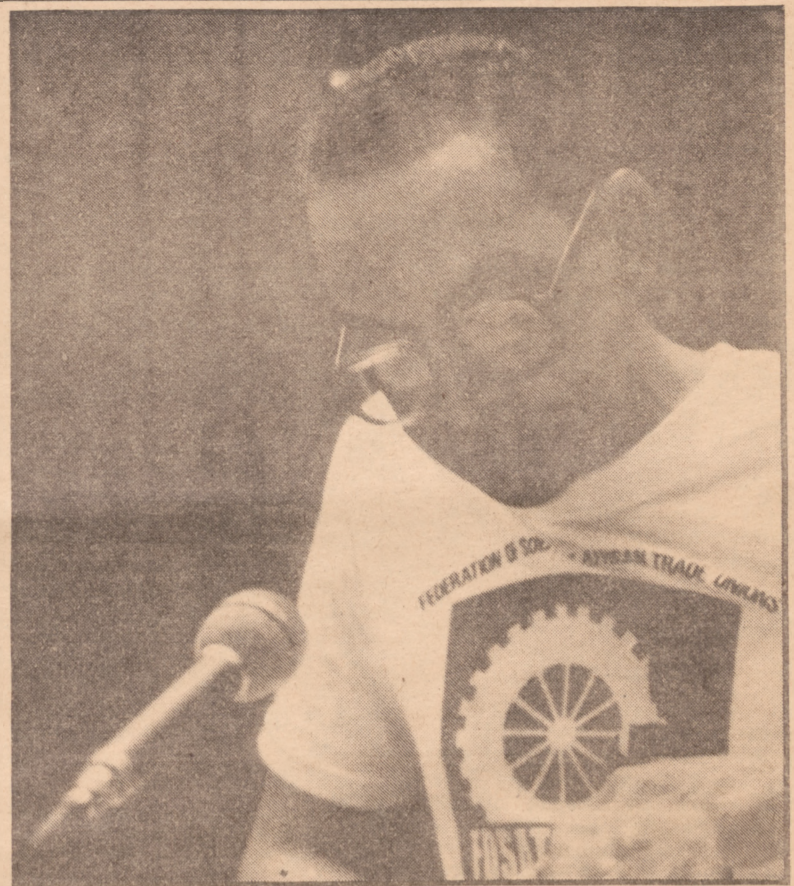
WORKER INTERESTS

"It is therefore essential that workers must strive to build their own powerful and effective organisation even while they are part of the wider popular struggle."

Only in this way could workers be certain that their interests will be served.

"We believe that FOSATU must set itself the task of giving leadership and direction to the building of a working class movement," Joe said.

However, FOSATU by itself would not constitute the working



JOE Foster addressing congress... 'Workers must build their own organisation'

class movement, and it would have to unite with other progressive trade unions to bring it about.

LIBERATION

Also, FOSATU would not be opposing the wider liberation struggle but would be contributing to it.

Asking how a working class movement should be built, Bro. Foster said no real progress could be made without large organisation. FOSATU would have to be able to mobilise major industries and major industrial areas.

But without quality of organisation as well no working class movement would emerge.

FACTORY FLOOR

This could be created by continuing to base organisation on the factory floor, where the workers have the most power and authority, and

worker leadership would gain experience through factory struggles.

This would also enable worker representatives to participate in their organisations from a position of strength and authority. Without the confidence, power and experience created by this organisational base, workers would never be able to give the lead to the working class and they would quickly surrender political leadership to others.

UNITY

Unity in the labour movement was also essential, Joe said. "If we are to create a working class movement then trade union unity has to be dealt with very early on in our struggle."

However, FOSATU should strive towards disciplined unity — because this was the only form of unity which could possibly meet its objective.

Industrial Councils debated

FOSATU intensively debated industry-wide bargaining and the industrial council system at its second national congress.

Among the resolutions before congress was that adopted by the central committee some time ago which has served as FOSATU policy up to now.

This states that the industrial council system in its present form is unacceptable, that affiliate unions should not enter them on terms which are to their disadvantage, and that they should begin to negotiate a system of plant-based industry-wide bargaining within the framework of FOSATU's principles.

One of the two new resolutions before congress came from the Sweet, Food and Allied Workers' Union, which proposed that FOSATU should not enter industrial councils, reaffirm its commitment to plant-based bargaining and should discuss more appropriate forms of industry-wide bargaining than industrial councils.

NUTW

The National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW) proposed that FOSATU should only enter industrial councils or other industry-wide bargaining systems if:

- plant-based bargaining continued to be accepted
- the rights and functions of shop stewards were not restricted in any way
- union recognition in plants is based only on representivity and is not granted to minority unions where majority unions existed in the plant.

An intensive debate followed which

revealed the different experiences which FOSATU unions have had with industrial councils.

Contributions from many worker representatives showed how strongly they felt on the issue.

Because time was running short and no agreement was in sight, SFAWU withdrew its resolution and the NUTW amended its resolution to exclude the words "industrial council" so that it dealt only with industry-wide bargaining.

However, time finally ran out and delegates voted that the issue should be referred back to union members for further discussion before the next central committee meeting.

Councils: The workers' views

• A delegate from the NUTW explained how a newly formed employer federation in the textile industry (TYFMA) had tried to force the union to accept industrial councils as a condition to plant bargaining.

The NUTW refused because the proposed council contained many of the undesirable features of other industrial councils.

However, because of union organisation and worker militancy, many of the employers were forced to recognise the union in their plants. The NUTW was now strong and representative enough to negotiate minimum wages and working conditions for the industry as a whole, and to lay down conditions on how this should take place.

It was therefore necessary for FOSATU to lay down guidelines on how industry-wide bargaining

should be structured, he said.

• A shop steward from Noodsberg Sugar Mill said workers' experience of industrial councils in the sugar industry had only been bad.

The industrial council had been used by minority unions to create a low wage structure, and industrial council agents had been employed to resolve disputes.

Recently, Nsibande's union — a union originally sponsored by the sugar employers themselves — negotiated a completely unsatisfactory wage increase for unskilled workers.

• He added: "I cannot see how we can possibly have anything to do with the present industrial council system."

• MAWU delegates also expressed

This is how Fosatu has grown

of Northern Natal was set up in February this year to promote local co-operation and organisation in the area.

At local level, resources have been shared and Fosatu activities co-ordinated through local executive committees and shop stewards' councils, the report says.

Shop stewards' councils have been particularly active in Empanjeni, Pietermaritzburg, Kathlehong, Springs and Uitenhage.

Fosatu unions are also organising

in many other areas where there are still no local offices.

All Fosatu unions have taken major strides forward in representing their members in the factory through shop stewards, the report says.

In April 1980, shop stewards were recognised in 30 factories. Since then, many more agreements have been signed and union rights have been granted or are being negotiated in over 130 factories organised by Fosatu.

Over 1 500 fully functioning shop stewards are protecting worker rights in Fosatu factories.

strong dissatisfaction with the industrial council system.

One delegate said the the metal industrial council was controlled by the established craft unions and other workers got nothing out of it.

It was better to push for plant-level bargaining and continue as in the past, he said.

Another speaker also argued that workers were strongly opposed to the present system.

A third delegate spoke of the need for a wider system in addition to plant bargaining.

• Fred Sauls, general secretary of NAAWU, told congress of the experience of the motor union in the Eastern Cape with their industrial council, which went back to the time the union was in TUCSA.

At that stage, the union joined the council because it wasn't part of a federation like FOSATU which could support them in rejecting it.

The union therefore had to try and reform it from within. Employers refused to bargain at plant level and tried to insist on the use of industrial council agents to handle complaints, which would have undercut shop stewards' rights.

However, workers would not accept this and the union succeeded in changing the structure so that plant-based bargaining was accepted and shop stewards' rights granted.

Workers sat on the council and no decisions were taken without report-backs to the members.

By manipulating the council, motor workers today have the highest wages in the country, he said.

Henkel boycott called

STOP PRESS:
agreement reached
with Henkel. Boycott
off.

THE Chemical Workers' Industrial Union (CWIU) has called for a boycott of all products manufactured by the Henkel company.

The call has come after a long struggle against Henkel management which recently culminated in many union members losing their jobs.

The union has been battling against Henkel management for the past four years. Last month, Durban workers finally downed tools after the company once again broke off negotiations with the union.

PRESIDENT FIRED

All the workers were fired and management refused to reinstate many workers, including all the union shop stewards. Among them is Abe Cwele, president of the CWIU and a member of Fosatu's Natal Regional Council.

A union spokesman has said: "We have called for the boycott because all attempts to negotiate with Henkel have failed."

"We believe that Henkel deliberately provoked the strike in order to get rid of the union in the plant. This has also allowed it to introduce harsher working conditions, such as increasing shift workers' hours from 40 to 45."

Henkel is a German firm and the boycott has already received widespread support overseas. The International Chemical and Energy Workers' Federation (ICEF), consisting of six million workers, has

pledged its support to Henkel workers and the boycott of Henkel products.

shop stewards and workers in all regions to distribute them as widely as possible.

The Products union has called for a boycott of the following products: WASHING POWDERS: White Giant, X-tra, Country Pride, Dato, GLUE: Pritt Stick, Pattex, Ponal, Kleerfix. DISHWASHERS: Swift, Dixie Sparkle, Blitz, Klenz.

The union has also called on workers to watch out for a new range of Henkel toilet goods which will be in the shops soon, with the brand name of KHASANA.

Congress warns Rembrandt

FOSATU has condemned the Henkel company's anti-union policies and actions and has given its full support to the consumer boycott of Henkel products called by the Chemical Workers' Industrial Union (CWIU).

In a resolution adopted at its second national congress in Hammanskraal, Fosatu also voted to extend the boycott to products of the Rembrandt cigarette company — which owns a share in Henkel — if the dispute is not resolved within a reasonable period of time.

The congress authorised the Natal region — in which the Henkel



Beat the White Giant! Delegates at Fosatu's second national congress with a Henkel boycott banner.

factory falls, to extend the boycott to Rembrandt products on behalf of Fosatu if this should become necessary.

REASONS

Setting out the reasons for its decisions, congress noted: four years to get a recognition agreement from Henkel and that the company has consistently refused to negotiate an agreement.

- that Henkel has consistently refused to negotiate wages and working conditions with the union
- that Henkel refused to negotiate the pensions issue

- that it has attempted to lengthen the working week and reduce shift pay and overtime pay
- that Henkel provoked a strike on these issues, quickly fired 230 workers and employed non-union scab labour at worse conditions of employment
- that it refused to re-employ 140 workers who wanted to return to work.

BACKGROUND

Setting out the background to the dispute, Charles Ngema, general secretary of the CWIU told congress that Henkel refused to negotiate in

good faith with the union and has avoided recognising the union.

"We feel management deliberately tried to provoke the strike in order to undermine the union's influence in the plant — and it succeeded," he said.

After workers had gone on strike, management set a deadline of 11 am when all workers still on strike "would have dismissed themselves".

'REFUSED TO TALK'

"The company agreed to meet a union delegation to discuss the situation. But we had a long way to travel and when we got there just after 11 o'clock, management refused to talk to us and dismissed all the workers," he said.

Alec Erwin of NUTW said the boycott was a good step and would warn employers that it could not deal so lightly with workers.

Breakthrough at Noodsberg

DESPITE the hostile attitudes of several companies in the Pietermaritzburg area, some important gains have been made by several Fosatu unions.

The Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) and the Sweet, Food and Allied Workers' Union (SFAWU) have won several agreements from employers which grant important new rights to workers in the area.

Recently, MAWU signed an agreement with APV Kestner, and is negotiating three other agreements in the area.

Still more important is SFAWU's

agreement with Noodsberg Sugar. This was signed on February 28 this year, after seven months of tough negotiations.

The sugar industry is dominated by two giant companies — Hulett's, which is controlled by Anglo American, and C.G. Smith, which owns Noodsberg Sugar and is a member of the Barlow-Rand group.

Both C.G. Smith and Hulett's have refused to negotiate wages and working conditions outside of Industrial Councils.

Noodsberg is not covered by an industrial council agreement, but the company insisted that the

SFAWU should apply for membership of the Industrial Council and that it should be extended to cover Noodsberg.

The union refused, and despite great company pressure on the union eventually persuaded Noodsberg to accept the negotiation of wages and working conditions at plant level.

'MAJOR VICTORY'

"This is a major victory," says Jay Naidoo, Pietermaritzburg organiser for the SFAWU. But we still have a long way to go." Managements at the other mills where we are organising are still demanding that the union should join the Industrial Council and sit alongside Sibande's Sugar Manufacturing and Refining Employees' Union.

"Our members refuse to do this. The inadequacy of the present Industrial Council system was recently once again demonstrated to them by the ridiculously low wage increase of 18 percent that Sibande's union negotiated on the council.

"We prefer to negotiate at plant level and to demand a living wage, not just minimum wages.

"This is exactly what we are doing at Noodsberg."

"We anticipate major problems in our negotiations at Noodsberg mainly because the unions on the Sugar Industrial Council have accepted the 18 percent increase. However we are making massive strides in the sugar industry and are hopeful that new and moderate platforms for plant level and industry wide bargaining will emerge."

Union Co-operative case:

'The law is on the bosses' side'

RENEWED questions have been raised about the role of the courts in relation to worker issues by a judgement affecting workers at the Union Co-operative sugar mill in Natal who were evicted from their hostels after a dispute at the plant last year.

In the judgment, Judge Booysens said he believed the workers were untruthful and that the company was right to use whatever means, including force, to evict the workers from the hostel.

The dispute started early last year when the company, together with other companies in the sugar industry, increased wages by 17 percent.

But unlike other employers, they withdrew free rations at the same time. Workers argued that the company had taken back with the one hand what it had given with the other, and that their conditions of work had been illegally changed.

WORKERS EVICTED

They therefore stopped work. Police

Stop-order facilities were also withdrawn.

AGGETT STOPPAGE

Other companies, including Prestige, have also hardened their attitude towards the unions. Management's hostility seems to have been strengthened even more by the stoppage on February 11 to mourn the death of trade unionist Neil Aggett in detention.

It is rumoured that the Natal Chamber of Industries has vowed to oppose any such future stoppage from the beginning.

But John Makhatini, MAWU organiser in Maritzburg, says "These attacks have only made the unions more determined."

"The union is prepared to take the consequences and intends reinforcing its power in the different factories in the area to make managements negotiate."

were called in and the workers were evicted from the hostels and arrested for trespassing.

The Sweet, Food and Allied Workers' Union (SFAWU) challenged this action in court, saying the employers had no right to throw the workers out of hostel rooms for which they have paid, without notice.

An initial victory was won when Judge Page re-instated Cyprian Ngewu in the hostel in April last year. The case of 49 other workers dragged on until Judge Booysens recently found in another judgment that:

- the workers' evidence was untruthful
- the management was entitled to dismiss the workers because they had struck illegally
- the workers never wanted to go back to the hostels
- the police were entitled to arrest workers for trespassing
- even if the workers left due to the threat of being arrested by the police, the company was justified in using whatever means it chose to remove them from the hostel, he said.

SERIOUS SETBACK

According to the SFAWU, the decision is a serious setback for migrant workers all over South Africa.

If the case had been won, it would have set a major precedent in law and would have forced all employers to get court orders first before evicting workers.

It confirms, the union says, what workers have always known — that the law is generally on management's side.

NAAWU honours leader

BROTHER Arthur van Wyk, who recently retired from General Motors after 25 years service, was presented with an honorarium at a meeting of NAAWU's National Executive Council in March.

Bro. van Wyk was a founder member of NAAWU and moved up from being a shop steward to becoming a member of the National Executive Council.

He also served on the union's Benevolent Fund Committee.

In a speech at the presentation ceremony, Jurie Harris, NAAWU president, said it was an important achievement when a union could point to leaders which rose from the factory floor to take the highest positions in the union.

In accepting his presentation from the union, Bro. van Wyk said he hoped he had contributed to the worker's struggle.

Maritzburg managers take hard line

workers downed tools.

The company still refused to negotiate and insisted that workers resign if they wanted their pension money paid out — which they did.

The company then refused to reinstate them and 500 fellow workers stopped work for five days.

They returned on the 19th after Hulett's threatened to dismiss them, but the company then refused to take back 218 union members. Over 180 workers, including the entire union steering committee, have still not been re-employed.

Since this strike, several managements in Maritzburg and the

surrounding areas have followed the hard line taken by Hulett's, which is mostly owned by the Anglo-American Corporation.

POLICE CALLED

Union officials were ordered out of the factory at a wage dispute at McKinnon Chain in February this year. Police were called in and workers were told to start work in fifteen minutes — or be removed from the factory by force.

This eventually happened and the next day the company only agreed to re-employ workers if they agreed not to take part in union activities.

SINCE the stoppage at Hulett's Aluminium over the pensions issue last year, relations between Fosatu unions and several companies in the Maritzburg area have reached a new low.

The Metal Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) says there are signs that some companies have deliberately tried to crush worker organisation in the area.

The conflict at Hulett's Aluminium started on October 12 last year. MAWU had been struggling to win recognition in the plant for nine years but had still not succeeded — even though other minority race groups had recognised unions in the plant.

DOWNED TOOLS

The dispute broke out when workers demanded that their pension contributions be refunded. Management refused and on October 12 about 120

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