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FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Fosatu salutes workers of the East Rand

THE LATEST centre of worker militancy is the East Rand where more than 10 strikes have taken place in the last two months.

The workers at Salcast, Hendler and Hendler (H and H), Bisonboard Colgate Langeberg, Kellog's Plant protection, Reef Chemical and Telephone Manufacturers of SA (Temsa) all downed tools during July and August.

FOSATU unions have been operating in the area since 1976 and all these factories, except Temsa, are unionised.

The major issue for workers at these factories was the need for higher wages. At Salcast, H and H and Bisonboard, workers had received adjustments to their salaries but they said these were too low.

COST OF LIVING

The wage increase did not cover the rise in the cost of living, which hits lower paid workers hardest.

At Bisonboard, workers were given a COL adjustment of R3,23. As one worker put it: "How can that begin to cover the increases in rent, transport, food and fuel. Paraffin alone went up by 7 cents last month."

The problem highlighted by the strikes is not only that wage increases are lower in times of rising prices and high profits for the bosses. The problem is also the way these increases are given.

In the case of Salcast and H and H, both organised by the Metal and Allied Worker's Union (Mawu), the increases were negotiated at the industrial council.

FIXED WAGES

Mawu has rejected the industrial council in its present form (see page 2) but the bosses still insist on fixing wages there, forcing workers to strike.

At Bisonboard, wages are fixed by a government-appointed board, without reference to the workers. The bosses believe once these wages are set, there is no need for further negotiations and it can decide on wage increases as it likes.

At the Colgate factory striking workers adopted the slogan "No Nocker, no worker". They were demanding that Mr Nocker, managing director of Colgate Palmolive, listen to their grievances personally.

This demand came after weeks of frustrating delays in the implementation of Colgate's agreement to recognise the Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU). Shop floor grievances were not being heard because of this delay.

This strike showed the growing demand for negotiation and consultation.

NEW CHAPTER

The recent strikes have opened up a new chapter in the history of worker organisation on the East Rand.

The growing strength and experience of **FOSATU** unions has been demonstrated by the ability of workers to take disciplined mass action both in striking and returning to work.

DISMISSED

A more equal bargaining situation is being created as a result of worker strength and because of reduction of police and Labour Deparment harrasment

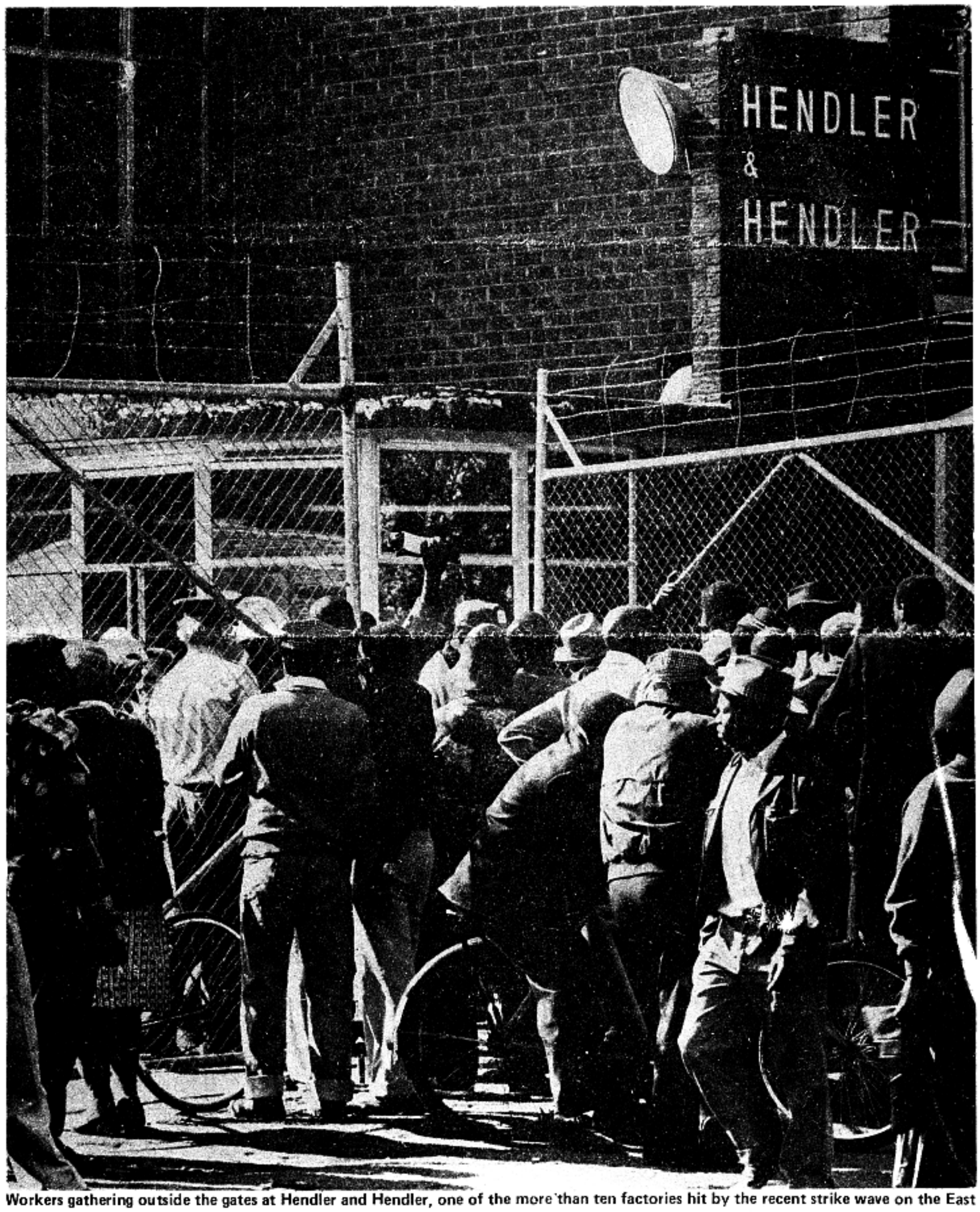
Only last year workers from Rely Precision Castings in Boksburg were dismissed, arrested and beaten up after a dispute with their boss.

NO VICTIMISATION

But in the recent strikes:
All workers were taken back
No victimisation took place;
The bosses were forced to continue negotiations with the unions, and
The union stayed strong.

MAJOR ADVANCE

FOSATU salutes the workers of the East Rand. At a time when the most common response to strikes elsewhere in the country is still intimidation and selective re-employment, East Rand workers have major made major advance.



Workers gathering outside the gates at Hendler and Hendler, one of the more than ten factories hit by the recent strike wave on the East Rand.

Mystery fire destroys union offices

FOSATU unions on the East Rand are undaunted by the mysterious fires which destroyed two of their offices on July 16.

Chris Dlamini, **FOSATU** 's Transvaal regional Chairman, said afterwards those responsible for the fire did not know how these unions work. "The union is in the factory, not the office. If people want to destroy the union, then the office is the wrong place to start a fire," he said.

Benoni police are investigating arson.

The Fire Department said they were called out to the fire at 3.30 am. The fire destroyed records belonging to **FOSATU** affiliates on the East Rand.

RECORD CARD

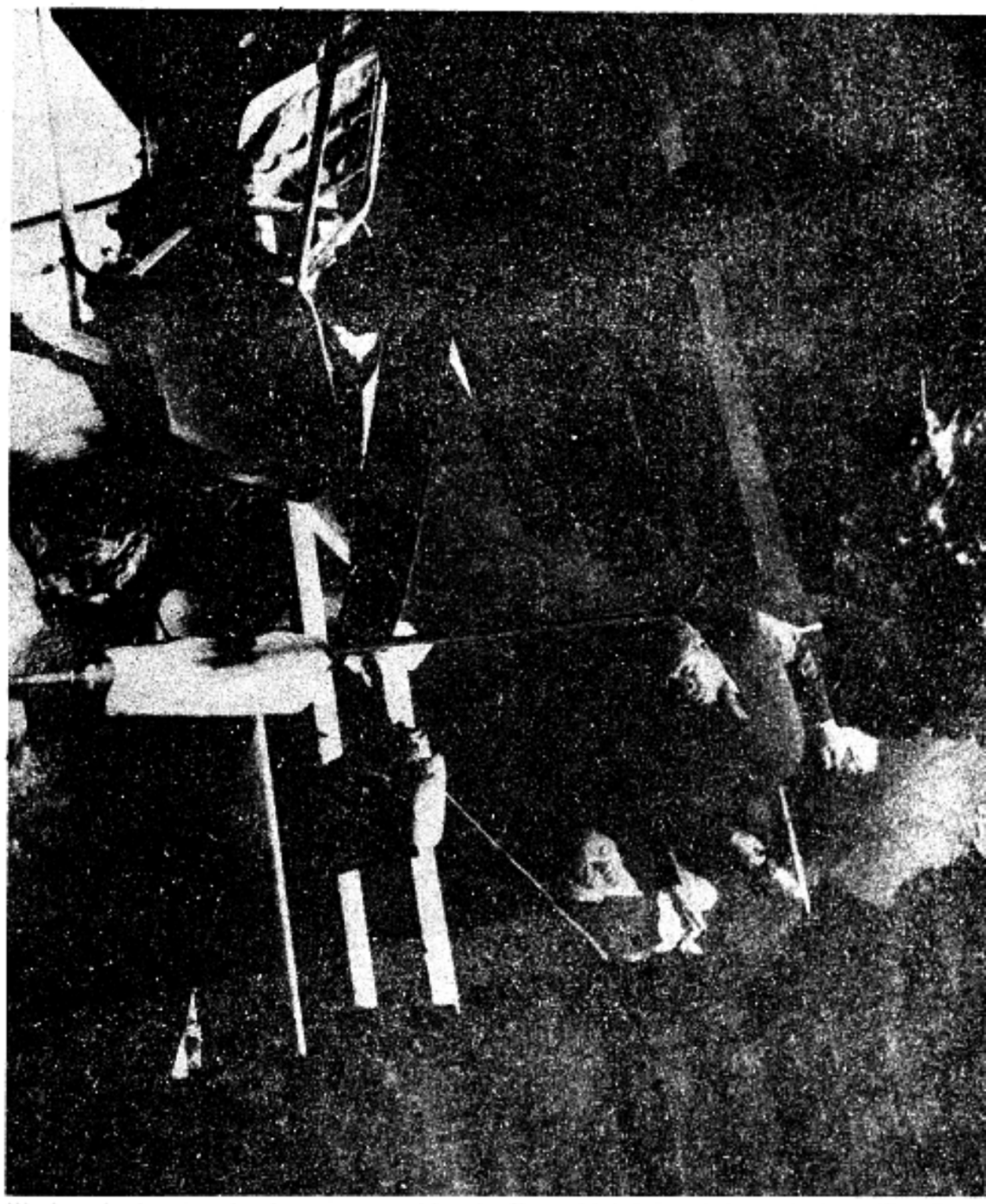
Worst hit was the METAL AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION (MAWU) whose files, minutes and record cards were destroyed. Furniture worth about R5 000 was burnt, and damage to the building was estimated at about R20 000 The floor of one office was entirely destroyed.

First **FOSATU** official on the scene was Transvaal Regional Secretary Taffy Adler. He was confronted by the smell of burnt furniture and petrol.

On investigation, it became clear that petrol had been splashed through all the **FOSATU** offices. "It was sheer luck that the other offices did not go up in the fire " he said.

CONDEMNED

An official **FOSATU** statement condemned those responsible for the fire. "It seems strange that the fire occurred at a time of increased worker activity and militancy on the East Rand. It also seems strange that the office that was most badly damaged was that used by **MAWU**, whose members have been involved in massive strike action in recent weeks, with almost 4000 workers at Salcast and Hendler and Hendler having struck for higher wages," The statement said.



Workers look up at the damage caused by the fire, which burned through the office floor but the unions are undaunted.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS NEW THRUST IN FOSATU AGREEMENTS

TWO NEW agreements signed by FOSATU unions give special recognition to the rights of women. In Springs, the Sweet, Food and Allied Workers' Union (SFAWU) negotiated a new deal on maternity leave for the women working at Kellogs.

DURBAN

In Durban, an arbitration settlement between the National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW) and SA Fabrics ensures that differences between the wages of male and female workers will disappear by 1982.

MATERNITY RIGHTS

Women at Kellogs had no maternity rights before the signing of the agreement in June this year. The agreement now stipulates that pregnant women get:

.A lump sum payment equal to 33% of her wages for a period of 12 weeks, and
First chance at any vacancy which occurs once she is ready to return to work.

PAYMENT

The general secretary of Sister Maggie Magubane, who negotiated the Kellog's agreement, explained that the lump sum payment was only 33% of the normal wage because the women could also claim maternity benefits from UIF.

AGREEMENT

"Under this agreement, a woman will now get almost 90% of her wages whereas before she got only 45%" she said.

BENEFITS

She added that SFAWU will attempt to improve these benefits at the next negotiations in December.

In Durban, NUTW struck a major blow for equality.

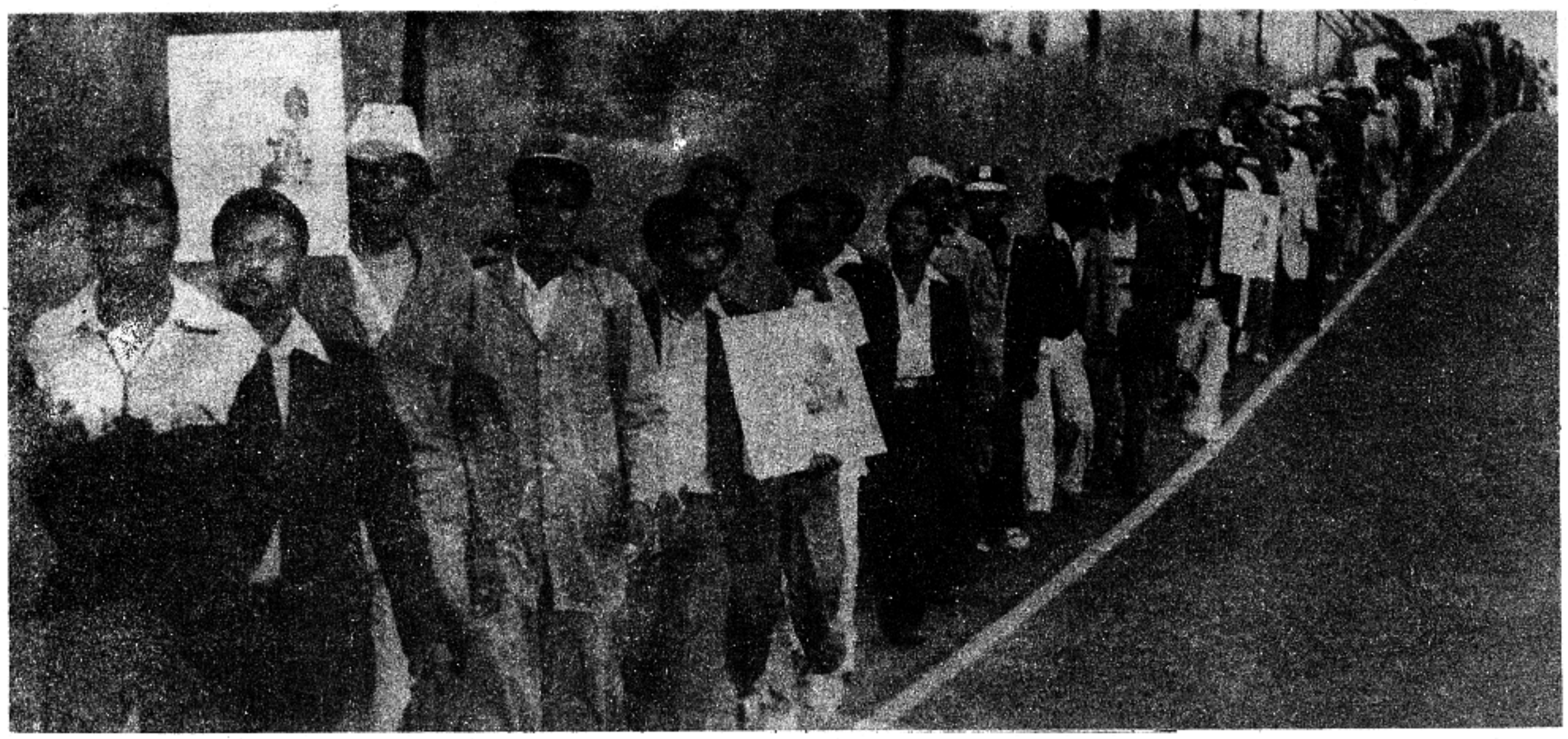
The textile industry is a notoriously badly paid industry and women have been exploited for years by being paid even less than the men.

The arbitration agreement gives an increase of 15% to all workers and states that wages must be equalised by 1982. This will be achieved in three stages

VICTORY

As a NUTW spokesman put it, 'this was a real victory for the women

FOSATU won an important legal victory in Pietermaritzburg recently when a judge ruled that Union Co-op in Dalton had to give back the accomodation of one of the SFAWU members who was forcibly evicted after a strike. Here workers are waiting outside the Supreme Court for the verdict. Judgement about the rest of the workers will be given later.



Dalton workers on the march to Pietermaritzburg after striking at Union Co-op.

Colgate : worker unity wins historic battle

A NUMBER of recent disputes have highlighted the importance of organised workers supporting each other in their hour of need.

The main reason for **FOSATU's** formation two years ago was to create unity among the many small and divided unions which had grown up in South Africa in the previous five years.

This unity is paying off now. The Colgate-Palmolive dispute, the Leyland, the Union Co-op and the Stag Packing struggles have all shown the importance of Worker Solidarity.

COLGATE PALMOLIVE

The value of a trade union federation like **FOSATU** can be seen most clearly in the Colgate dispute. Colgate is an American company which has branches all over the world. It has signed the Sullivan principles, and was seen by itself and by others as one of the most progressive firms in the field of labour relations.

The emptiness of this claim and of the Sullivan principles were exposed when, the company refused to speak to the Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU) for over a year, or to negotiate wages or working conditions except through a useless industrial council.

The C.W.I.U. therefore called a conciliation board to try and settle the dispute and at the same time began preparing for a strike and for a national boycott of Colgate products. All **FOSATU** affiliates were consulted about the plan and, a month before the boycott was called, agreed to give their support.

After two days of talking the conciliation board negotiations deadlocked. The 30 day 'cooling off' period laid down by the law before a legal strike could take place had the opposite effect. Mass meetings were held in a Colgate canteen, and a Colgate song was composed. Outside of the factory the full weight of **FOSATU** was thrown into a national boycott of Colgate products.

The results could be felt within two weeks of the boycott call. In the 1 500 strong Alusaf factory in Richards Bay, in the 6 000 strong Volkswagen factory in Uitenhage, in the 2 000 strong Salcast factory in Boksburg and in many other concerns, workers went to work with boycott stickers all over their overalls.

FOSATU members also called on their community support. Traders in Richards Bay, Uitenhage and the East Rand agreed to remove Colgate products from their shelves; children of **FOSATU** members distributed pamphlets in the streets.

FOSATU

Elsewhere **FOSATU** affiliates more directly gave a helping hand. Transport and General Workers Union members posted boycott Colgate stickers on their buses, on the East Rand; C.W.I.U. shop-stewards in Durban approached their managements to demand that they speak to Colgate/Palmolive, and bosses in many industries on the East Rand began to fear a general sympathy strike.

All this happened before the boycott got into full swing. Obviously it would bite hard once a strike had taken place. Realising this, Colgate management finally came to their senses, and agreed to negotiate with the union face to face.

The Colgate boycott was an historic event. It was a planned boycott, and not one organised after a defeat had already taken place; it was organised mainly by **FOSATU** members themselves, and it took place to defend a principle of vital importance to all workers. It gave a message which no-one can mistake: It doesn't pay to play with **FOSATU** unions.

LEYLAND

While Colgate workers were boiling, a bitter struggle was being fought by the National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers at Leylands' Cape Town car plants.

By the beginning of this year wages at Leyland had fallen far behind those paid to other car workers in South Africa. After fruitless negotiations with Leylands bosses, workers took the decision to strike.

The bosses refused to give in, and recruited scabs to take the workers' places. Some union members returned to work but over 500 stayed out for 6 weeks.

Leyland workers held meetings with their communities all over the Cape peninsula and these gave generous support. Money was raised, scabs were discouraged from taking union members' jobs and production suffered in the plant.

Support was also pledged by Leyland car workers in Britain, who threatened not to handle parts exported to South Africa, by the International Metal Workers Federation, and by **FOSATU** affiliates.

Late in July this powerful display of solidarity received its reward. The Leyland bosses resumed negotiations with the union and agreed that union members would be taken back.

The Leyland bosses have learnt a lesson. They planned to break the union but for six weeks of hardship union members kept their unity and refused to give in.

Leyland will think twice about taking such action again. And workers in South Africa have been given a lesson of courage and endurance to inspire them as their struggle goes on.

STAG PACKING

The Colgate and Leyland disputes are settled for the moment but other struggles continue. The Stag Packing Company in Springs recently locked its workers out in the middle of recognition negotiations with the National Union of Textile Workers.

The Union Co-op Sugar Mill in Natal dismissed 600 workers belonging to the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union who struck when a free food allowance was withdrawn. Both are **FOSATU** affiliates.

Both are receiving aid from other **FOSATU** unions and sympathetic community bodies. At public meetings held in Springs, delegates from Cosas and Azapo pledged their support for Stag Packing workers and a shop stewards council of 100 worker representatives from 5 **FOSATU** unions recently promised all the support it could give. Similar meetings in Pietermaritzburg have offered help to Union Co-op workers.

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Stag Packing is owned by the British-based Turner Newall company. An equally backward British company is Wilson Rowntree which owns a factory in East London. There a dispute led to the sacking of 600 workers. Two months after their dismissal, Wilson Rowntree workers called a boycott of Wilson Rowntree products.

FOSATU has given its support to their struggle and calls on all workers to boycott Wilson Rowntree sweets. It has also called on the police to release detained leaders of the South African Allied Workers Union to which Wilson Rowntree workers belong.

As the Rowntree boycott pamphlet says: 'an injury to one is an injury to all.'

INDUSTRIAL COUNCILS : UNION STRUGGLES CONTINUE

FOSATU unions are continuing the fight against unrepresentative industrial councils and we are winning.

Bosses all over South Africa are demanding that unions join these councils. Companies such as Colgate Palmolive and Sappi have said they will only negotiate wages and working conditions at industry-wide level through industrial councils.

Both the Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU) and the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union (PWAWU), **FOSATU** affiliates, rejected this demand. CWIU said it is not opposed to representative bargaining on an industry wide level, but it will not give up its right to negotiate wages and working conditions at the factories where it is representative.

At a meeting with the employers' association P.W.A.W.U. demanded to know:

> Whether by coming into council, the union would lose its right to negotiate at plant level?
>
> Whether by negotiating at industry level, in a council where the vast majority of workers were still not represented, the agreement would cover unrepresented workers?
>
> Why the employers demanded the union be representative in the factory before granting recognition but then tried to force unions into unrepresentative industrial councils?

The employers association has not yet given satisfactory answers to these questions.

Why are employers pushing so hard for industrial councils? Their idea seems to be to force black unions to negotiate wages for the whole industry when they have only joined up a small number of the workers.

They want workers to negotiate at a place where they are weak, and not in individual factories where they are strong.

FOSATU has repeatedly rejected unrepresentative industrial councils. When unions are representative of workers in their industry, and where workers retain democratic control over negotiations, industrial councils can be made to work to the workers' benefit.

This is true of the Automobile Assembly Industrial Council in the Eastern Cape, where the National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers, for the first time in South Africa, won the right to a living wage.

But in most cases, the newly registered black and non-racial trade unions do not yet represent a majority of workers in the industry, and the industrial council acts to set wages throughout the industry at a uniformly low level.

The problems are worst where an industrial council already exists to keep the bosses united. In the chemical industry there is no strong industrial council or employers' federation, and the **FOSATU** affiliated Chemical Workers Industrial Union was able to resist employers' demands that it join. Even then the C.W.I.U. had to call a boycott and threaten a strike before the bosses gave in.

In the Wood and Paper industry, there is a stronger employers' federation and they took the same stand. P.W.A.W.U. shop stewards at the Sappi Paper Mill were shown a letter by their bosses written by the Industrial Council saying that no company should sign a recognition agreement with a union that had not agreed to join the council.

Only after seven months of struggle by the union and six hours of continuous negotiations at which the shop stewards threatened to strike, did Premier Paper Mill agree to drop its demand that the union enter the industrial council.

Premier's statement to union shop stewards at the end of the negotiations stands as a warning to workers all over South Africa. "We never wanted the industrial council" , "But we were under so much pressure from the employers' association that negotiations had to get to this point before we could give in".

Together with P.W.A.W.U. **FOSATU** hopes this drives the last nail into the coffin of the industrial council as it presently exists.

In the Steel and Engineering industry, **FOSATU** unions face the most powerful industrial council in South Africa and the strongest employers' federation. As a result, when workers go on strike in a single factory and the employer begins to give in to their demands, the employers federation steps in to make sure the company resists

Recent negotiations and strikes by members of the **FOSATU** affiliated Metal and Allied Workers' Union make this clear. Only one company, Vaal Metals, granted a direct wage rise. Hendler and Hendler gave a R5 a week attendance bonus as a way out of the problem and Salcast and Dorbyl gave nothing at all.

When we look at who owns Salcast and Dorbyl the reasons for their stubborn refusal become clear. About 60%of Salcast is owned by the South African Government's Iron and Steel Corporation (Iscor) and the other 40% by Anglo American Corporation. The biggest part of Dorbyl is also owned by these two companies.

Together with one or two other large companies, these giant firms control the industry's employer federation (S.E.I.F.S.A.) and the industrial council. It is Anglo American in the engineering, in paper and other industries which is trying to ram the industrial council down black workers' throats.

They know that in one factory will lead to improvements elsewhere, so they use their federation and the industrial council to take a common stand.

Workers can still gain concessions by united action in their factories as happened in Hendler and Hendler and Vaal Metals. But to make major advances the industrial council must be reformed or set aside.

Only when workers can match the employers' strength in a powerful, national industrial union will major gains be won. Only then will industry-wide bargaining make sense.

Chris Dlamini, FOSATU'S Transvaal regional Chairman, addressing workers at a FOSATU rally in Richards Bay. Beside him is Jeffrey Vulami, MAWU president.

Fosatu membership soars

FOSATU membership has soared in the first half of 1981. All regions and all unions report the same story of rapid growth and stronger organisation.

The figures make this clear:

- Active signed up membership has risen from 60 000 to 70 000
- Paid up membership has risen from 33 000 to 48 000
- Recognition agreements have been concluded or are being negotiated with over 50 companies, 5 times more than for the previous 5 years.
- Over 20 strikes have taken place in **FOSATU** organised factories, more than in any other group.

Even at a time when all union in South Africa are growing, it is clear **FOSATU** is making the fastest progress of all.

Some areas of **FOSATU** have grown particularly fast. In northern Natal and the East Rand, in the National Union of Textile Workers and the Sweet, Food and Allied Workers UNion expansion has been spectacular. Branches of M'A.W.U. P.W.A.W.U., C.W.I.U., and S.F.A.W.U. have been established in Northern Natal so that most of the factories and the workers are now organised in **FOSATU** unions.

On the East Rand, workers are flooding in to join FOSATU unions. The **FOSATU** Workers' Project has organised 18 factories with a work force of 5 000 before transferring them to **FOSATU unions in the** region. At present, a further 20 factories are being organised.

The Transvaal branch of M.A.W.U. has also grown at an amazing rate. Over 20 new factories have been organised in the first half of 1981. Branch membership which stood at 8 000 in April last year has climbed above the 16 000 mark.

Equally big steps have been taken by N.U.T.W. and the S.F.A.W.U. The N.U.T.W. now has 12 000 members and is organising extensively in Natal, the Eastern Cape and the East Rand. The S.F.A.W.U. is far advanced with negotiation in two factories near Pietermaritzburg and workers in many others are close to winning their demands. Empangeni, Mooi River and Estcourt are also fast becoming **FOSATU** towns.

As **FOSATU's** General Secretary, Joe Foster, recently remarked: "With each month that passes **FOSATU** comes closer to its goal of strong national unions with the power to secure major working class demands."

Wits course for workers

FOSATU has signed a unique contract with Wits University to provide courses on worker economics and politics for members of their unions.

In an official statement, **FOSATU** hailed this as "A break through for workers as university resources which have so far been reserved for the sons and daughters of management will now be available to workers."

Each course will consist of an introductory section lasting three weeks and a one-week advanced course.

Participants will stay on the campus and will have access to all university facilities such as the libraries.

The first couse deals with the development of the factory system and the history of worker organisation. It examines the history of workers in Europe, America and South Africa.

The advanced courses looks at the South African economic system, Government labour policy and worker reaction to it.

The courses have been designed by a joint committee of **FOSATU** and university representatives.

Any worker interested in attending the courses should apply to **FOSATU** through his union.