

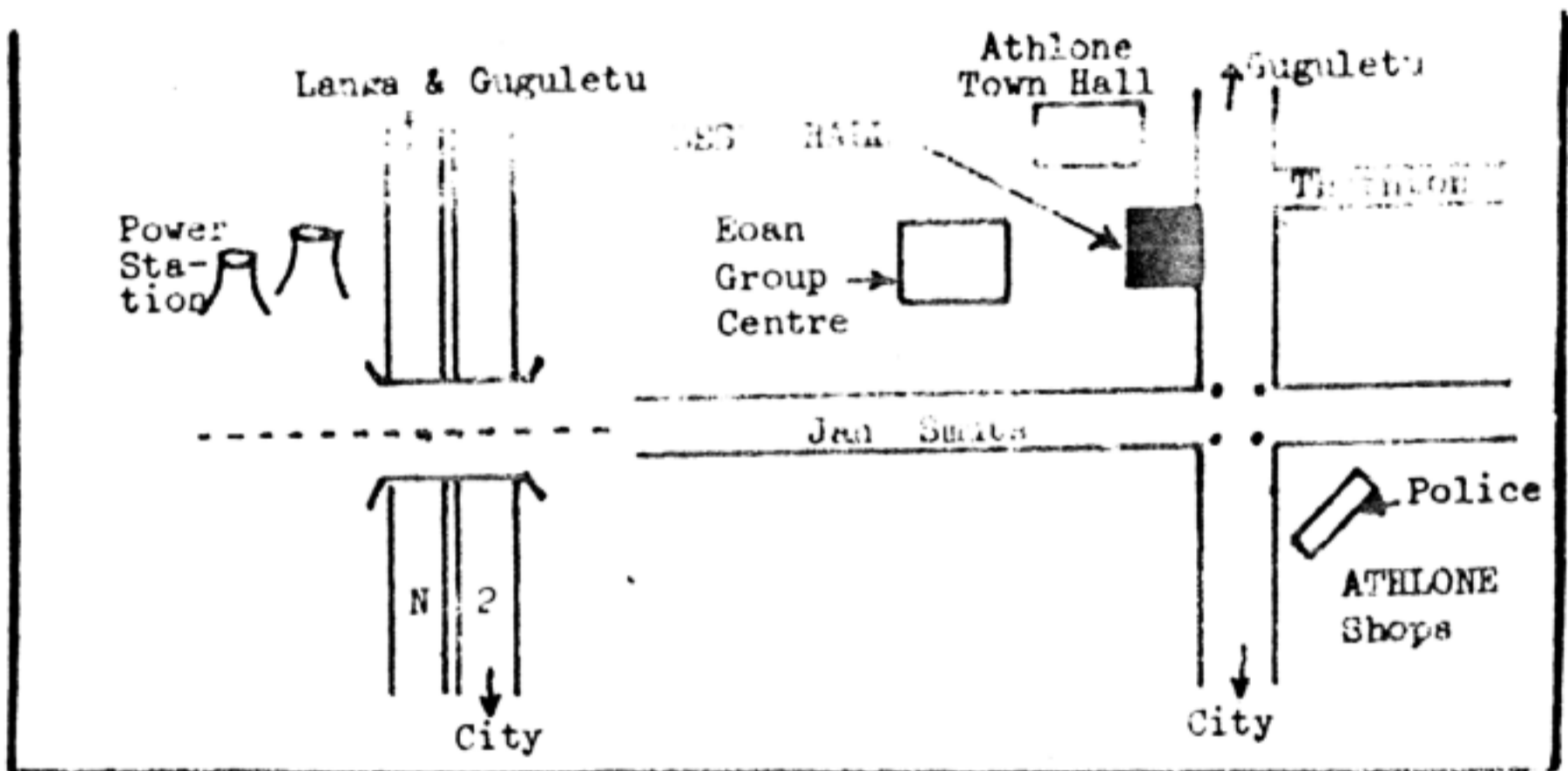
Saturday afternoons workers will be given more lessons about their rights in Athlone. They will be told about the importance of organizing other workers and how to go about it.

These lessons will appear in the "Workers' Advisory Project", which is connected with the Advice Bureau.

Venue: British Ex-Servicemen's Hall,
Klipfontein Road,
Athlone.

Time: 2.30 p.m. on Saturday, 4th May.

All workers will have to come with members of the committee.



IPHEPHA LABASEBENZI

This is the 8th workers' newspaper to appear in Cape Town over the last year. But we are still not getting the reports in from the workers. Make sure that your factory appoints one worker to keep "Abasebenzi" in touch with what is happening. Tell us about your grievances, your victories, your attempts to organise, your bosses and your foremen.

The other problem is making sure all the workers in Cape Town get the opportunity to read this newspaper. Handing it out in streets is not the best way. The best way is for each factory to appoint one person or two to distribute Abasebenzi for us. If you want to do this, write to us and give us your name and address. When Abasebenzi is printed, we will bring a package to you iwth lots of copies of the newspaper. You can hand it out to your fellow-workers before work or after work the next day.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKERS' ORGANISATION

It is extremely important for workers to organise themselves to be a powerful force that will fight any injustice that can affect them as workers. In order to understand the importance of this organisation, workers should know that work is what keeps up their livelihood, the bringing up of families, education, eating, rent, furnishes, entertainment, health etc, so have to raise money for all these things. As all these things can be achieved after many years' efforts, it is important that the only way by which they can be achieved i.e. "work" should offer congenial working conditions i.e. happiness in spirit, security etc. In achieving all this, no workers have ever achieved good working conditions by mere washing or selling one another to the bosses. They have achieved sound and rewarding conditions by standing together and fighting together. One could be keen to know what workers should be standing together for, and what they should be fighting for. In order to answer or realize this, it is important for workers to understand that most employers are together as a powerful force that is just aiming at expanding their businesses and getting richer without taking the workers' needs into consideration. Very few employers ever take the abovementioned requirements of the workers into consideration, most are protecting their interests at the expense of the workers. This state of affairs results in making "work" which is what a human being was made for, "hell". It is therefore of paramount importance that organisations like the Western Province Advice Bureau, Trade Unions, Wages Commission, should be there to help workers in their complaints and in getting organised, negotiations, etc, as it is impossible for workers as individuals to get anything right without victimisation. To be relevant to the Western Province workers' situation, there is the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau, an organisation aimed at helping workers with their difficulties. It has so far embarked upon organising the workers to form up Work Committees. This attempt has been fruitful in many factories.

We have the Steeldale workers that came to join the Advice Bureau not knowing a single right that covered them. The Advice Bureau tried to organise all the workers at that big factory and formed up a Works Committee. This was quite a big task as most workers had never before directly negotiated with employers. But because the Advice Bureau assured them of the protection that the new Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act offered them, the workers of Steeldale formed a Works Committee. Before their names had even been registered in Pretoria the employers started giving workers about 2c an hour increase. After the registration of the committee, the workers had a meeting with the management and started demanding their rights the Advice Bureau taught them which were due to them. This had incredible results. Employers admitted not knowing the regulations that covered their own workers and a lot of wrongs were corrected, like work intervals, sick pay, overtime pay. This encouraged the workers to a point the bosses could not stick and they tried to introduce a Liaison Committee. The workers refused this because they knew it was a means to divide them.

WRITTEN BY AN ORGANISER.

ADVICE BUREAU BLOCKED BY AUTHORITIES

The Western Province Workers Advice Bureau has been temporarily blocked by the authorities. The Bantu Administration Office has refused to register their organiser, and one of the assistants was arrested and intimidated.

So for some time, the office has been closed, and it is not expected that the office will be opened for a few weeks. The Advice Bureau has been consulting lawyers, and unless their organiser is registered, there will be a court case shortly against the authorities.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that the organiser has been put out of action and the office closed, a wonderful amount of organising has been going on. Workers have shown that they do not need to be told to organise - they are forming workers' committees and organising their fellow workers on their own.

It has been clear to many workers that the authorities do not want workers to organise or to voice their grievances, and it is clear that they are afraid of the workers' committees that are springing up in dozens of factories, in Cape Town, in Natal and in Johannesburg.

This may sound strange since it was the authorities who allowed works committees to be registered by their Act of Parliament last year! It seems that workers are given the right to organise on paper, but when they take up this right, attempts are made to block them! But workers in Cape Town in over 30 factories have shown that they are not going to ask for permission before they organise - they will protect their interests and their families interests in the way that the law encourages them.

So although the Advice Bureau will not be opened for a few weeks, workers must not think that they have no work to do. In fact, they have more work to do than ever. Workers must use their own resources, their own skills, their own talents, to organise themselves and their fellow-workers. Show the authorities that you do not need full-time organisers to come and organise you - organise yourselves!

WORKERS COMMITTEES! It is your job to help your fellow-workers in other factories. Bring them the benefits that you have obtained for yourselves.

WORKERS! A giant movement is springing up all over the land. Workers are combining to protect their interests, and better their wages and working conditions. Join them - **ORGANISE!**

STRIKE AND BOYCOTT BRINGS FIRM TO ITS KNEES

South Africa is not the only country where workers are exploited. Even in America, where poor people are allowed to vote, and where black people have all the rights of white people, and where there is very little apartheid, many workers are still exploited and paid starvation wages, and treated like machines.

A striking example is the Farah company in TEXAS, which makes clothes. It has about * 10,000 workers, mostly black. The management has a health clinic, sells low price lunches, transport workers to and from work, and has a pension scheme. This all sounds very fine, and the management expected the workers to be content.

But the workers were allowed no trade unions, and were not allowed to negotiate with the management. In other words, the management refused to have collective bargaining with the workers. The workers were very unhappy by this - it meant that the managers could do what they wanted with the workers without consulting them. (Does this sound like South Africa?)

So the workers attempted to form a union. The leaders and many other workers were immediately sacked. This started a massive strike, which has been going on since 21st May, 1972!

The action taken by the workers was organised by the famous hero of the American labour movement, Caesar Chavez. He organised strikes, go-slows, and a boycott of all the clothes made by Farah. This boycott spread from Texas to all parts of America, and even spread to the rest of the world! On Father's Day 1972, and international boycott of all Farah goods was begun.

As a result of the concerted, unified worker action, the company lost over R6,000,000 in the rest of that year, 1972. The total profit of the company is in 1973 dropped by R2,000,000. This shows how badly the company was affected by the boycott. Millions of people all over the world refused to buy any clothes with the "FARAH" mark on them.

Naturally the management was not pleased with the actions of the workers. The Mayor of the town, all the businessmen and the policeforce sided with Farah. The police used such familiar tactics as intimidation, baton charges, police dogs, informers, and tear gas to break up strikers' meetings and picket-lines (picketers are strikers who try to stop the company from using other workers to continue the work of the factory).

Police intimidation was used to frighten the leaders and the workers in their private lives. But no matter what the police tried, they could not alter the workers from their course of action because they were determined, organised and unified. Nothing can stop the workers' movement when it is unified, and this is what the town and the company discovered when the strike dragged on for two years and cost the businessmen so much money. The town got a bad name from tourists because of what was being done to the workers. Meanwhile, the workers were raising money among themselves and from other trade unions throughout the country to provide for their wives and children while they were on strike.

All the workers fired during the strike were taken back by Farah. The management agreed to recognise and negotiate with the trade union of Caesar Chavez (The Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Union).

Eventually, after 21 months on strike, the town mayor, the police and Farah gave in. It was a great victory for American workers.

Dear Sir,

For five years I have been working for Irvin and Johnson, but I only earn R9,50 per week and if I come to work every day, I get another R2. But you never get it because if you are one minute late during the day they take your bonus away. You know what, the bus and the train are alike. I start every morning before 6 a.m. to get to work before 7.30 a.m. Some nights we leave the factory at 9 p.m. and I only get home at 11 p.m. if I am lucky.

Yesterday Irvin and Johnson sacked 6 European supervisors because they cannot drive the hotnots enouth. Now they have got a man from Johannesburg by the name of John to make us work harder. My boss said to me last night that they can pay a man R80 to come and chase the workers, but they cannot pay us a cent per hour more. I feel very sorry for him because he was very good to us. Do you know that this man speeded up all the machines to cut double the same money, but we have to work three times harder. He gives us targets and if we cannot reach them, they fire us. My boss told me that they are only going to use 300 girls to do the same work at 900. Die meide wat nie will werk moet voetsek. Do you think this is fair?

At work we have no place to sit and the young girls have no place to play. You are only allowed 3 minutes to go to the lavatory. Every time you go you must clock a card. Sometimes you feel shy to so many times to the toilet, but you must.

Can someone not come to the factory and help us? Come and see the conditions in which we must work. I cannot stop working because I cannot afford to let my children suffer.

My boss said the other day that the firm made R3,000,000 profit, maar niks vir die hotnots nie. Please come one day and see for yourself. Come and help us get something more. I would like you to come and ask if I am telling lies. Everyone will tell you stories. You know we never get a piece of fish or anything here if we want some. The girls steal some and then they put them in jail. There was only one boss that always gave us a parcel once a week, Mr. Van Wyk, but he works in the office now. There are only a few foremen left and if they do not drive us hard enough then John will also sack them. They are good bosses but they do it, because they also have families.

I have written to the Argus before, but they do not want to listen to my complaints. I think the firm gives them too much work.

I cannot give you my name because they will sack me. But please come yourself. I know you people will help the Coloureds.

Thank you.