

WHAT DO THE WORKERS THINK?

Abasebenzi spoke to a work-  
last week to find out at  
first-hand what problems he  
faces at his work and what  
solutions he thinks the  
workers can find to their  
problems. We hope to pub-  
lish interviews regularly  
in Abasebenzi. In this way  
the workers of Cape Town  
can communicate more easi-  
ly with each other. They  
can find out what some of  
the difficulties are in  
other factories.

We spoke to a member of  
the Works-Committee at the  
City Council Engineering  
Department at Groenvlei.  
He has been working there  
for 5 years and earns R23.  
a week. We shall call him  
Mr. Sithole, though this  
is of course not really his  
name!

We first asked Mr. Sithole  
about the Works-Committee.  
The committee was formed  
with the help of the Ad-  
vice Bureau. At first work-  
ers were afraid to join the  
committee and did not under-  
stand what it was about. Now  
more and more workers are  
understanding the benefit of  
standing together. Most of  
the workers now support the  
Works-Committee, so that it  
is petitioning to be regist-  
ered.

Why do the workers need a  
Works-Committee? Mr. Sithole  
told us that there many prob-  
lems at work that the work-  
ers need to solve. He told  
us, for instance, that the  
workers used to travel to  
work in a truck provided by  
the City Council. This truck  
was not covered. In bad wea-  
ther, the workers used to  
get soaked and would arrive  
at work freezing cold. Then  
the workers got together and  
organized their own trans-  
port. They now travel in a  
truck that is more comfort-  
able.

Mr. Sithole said that another  
problem at work is that some  
workers (like himself) work  
12½ hours a day and get only

R23. a week. Some others  
work for 8 hours and get  
paid £35.40 a week. Manage-  
ment claims that the more  
poorly paid workers do not  
work very hard and are doing  
easy work. But Mr. Sithole  
does not agree that this is  
true. He also said that the  
differences in wages help to  
make the workers less uni-  
ted. This is because some  
of the better-paid workers  
feel they do not want to  
stand together and help  
support the Works-Committee.  
This is foolish, Mr. Sithole  
said. There are many problems  
that all the workers face.  
These will best be solved  
if everybody joins together  
to face management.

Mr. Sithole gave us some  
examples of problems that  
all the workers should solve  
together. For instance, they  
have to travel long hours to  
get to work. Also, the City  
Council hires the workers on  
a hire-and-fire basis. When  
the workers grumble about  
the poor conditions at work,  
management just tells them  
to find work somewhere else.  
Mr. Sithole thinks that if  
the workers have a strong  
Works-Committee, if they  
speak with one voice, then  
they can solve these prob-  
lems.

Mr. Sithole told us that he  
has been on a training-  
course at the Advice Bureau.  
Although it was difficult to  
find time to attend the train-  
ing course, he said the course  
has helped him in a number of  
ways. He attended the course  
with workers from other factor-  
ies. Thus he discovered that  
many other workers in Cape  
Town face the same problems as  
the workers at the City Coun-  
cil. The Advice Bureau taught  
him many skills that were need-

ed to organize and run the  
Works-Committee. Mr. Sithole  
said his committee decided to  
join the Advice Bureau because  
they were convinced of the  
need for unity among all the  
workers.

Duens Workers in Court.

Workers will remember  
the disturbances at Duens  
reported in a previous  
Abasebenzi. Nineteen work-  
ers were arrested by the  
police for allegedly refus-  
ing to work after 3 of  
their fellow-workers were  
dismissed.

These workers appeared in  
court last month, and some  
interesting statements  
were made. The boss said  
that the workers were dis-  
missed, because their  
work was not good enough.  
The manager in charge of  
the workers disagreed. He  
said that they had been  
dismissed because they were  
worker representatives.  
The trial continues in  
January. In the meantime,  
nearly all the accused have  
found employment in other  
factories.

A.G.M.

The annual general meeting  
of the Western Province Ad-  
vice Bureau was held on  
Sunday 26th October. Re-  
ports were given by Zora  
Mehlemakhulu on behalf of  
the organisers and by re-  
presentatives of several  
different works-committees.  
A new executive was elec-  
ted for 1976. The members  
elected are M. Msutwana  
(Standard Bank - chair-  
man), M. Nosilele (Globe -  
vice-chairman), M.W. Mpu-  
ting (Mastertreads), L.  
Obtwana (S.B.H.), R. Nqonji  
(Anchor Yeast), Sidina  
(Gearings), B. Mandita  
(Printpak), M. Margis  
(Printpak), S. Mazwenbe  
(Lupini), R. Sizani (Steel-  
dale).