

not confused by the skilled workers trying to use them to protect their own skilled position.

BUS-BOYCOTT.

The workers of Madadeni and Osizweni township near Newcastle (Natal) have refused to accept a rise in bus-fares. The bus-company wanted to raise fares to 30c from 25c. Two years ago fares were 8c. Instead of accepting this, the workers in the townships have decided to boycott the buses.

It is not surprising that workers get angry when they see prices rising all around them. Meanwhile, their wages remain low. They cannot afford to pay for higher bus-fares-anyway it is not their fault that they have to travel so far to get to work.

There are 40,000 to 50,000 workers who decided to boycott the buses in Madadeni. They are not the first workers in this country to express their anger at rising bus-prices and bad conditions. In 1943 and 1957 there were huge bus-boycotts by workers in Alexandria township near Johannesburg. In 1957 the workers refused to use the buses for three months, even though there was much intimidation by the authorities! In the end, the bus company had to lower the fares.

At the end of last year there was another boycott in the town of East London. Some fares were raised by 40c a week. The workers could not afford these prices and refused to travel on the buses. Some buses were stoned. Even though one man was shot by the police and many arrested, the workers stood united. Once again they were victorious - Mr. Sebe of the Ciskei Government was forced to buy the bus company. Sebe tried to make the workers pay the

increased fares, but they refused. The fares were brought down to the old level.

The workers of Madadeni and Osizweni have learnt the lessons of the past. Firstly, they organized very carefully. Fares were to be raised on a Monday - the workers spent the whole weekend planning to make sure that everyone knew of the boycott. When the boycott began on September 29, many workers also refused to go to work. Companies like Bester Homes, Defy Industries, Veka Clothing and Iscor were short of up to 90% of their workers. That day, all of the 160 buses travelling to Newcastle from the township were empty. A few workers tried to use the buses but their fellow workers stopped them. They knew that the workers must be 100% united. The bus-company tried to use an old trick that management uses. They offered to leave things for two weeks and hold discussions in the meanwhile. But the workers were not fooled - they knew that in two weeks the company would have tried to breed disunity, and would raise the fares again after much clever talk. Besides, the workers now said that even the old prices were too high! They were also angered when the Mayor of Madadeni, Dr. Mdalose, called for police protection. On Tuesday over 1000 workers marched through Newcastle waving sticks. The police could do nothing about it. The workers destroyed the bus-coupon office, the beer-hall and many bus-shelters. A few were arrested, but the boycott continued. On Wednesday night, workers tried to burn down buildings belonging to the Bantu Investment

Corporation, which runs the bus-company. They also took two people hostage, including the Iscor compound-manager. Police had to set the hostages free.

On Friday, the boycott was still 100% strong. At a meeting on Sunday October 3, workers rejected offers made by the bus-company and the B.I.C. They called for negotiations with a new bus-company - they were tired of the tricks of the old one. They decided to boycott the B.I.C. bosses indefinitely.

They also complained of how police were taking the side of the bus-company. In an effort to break the boycott, the police were stopping cars and taxis at roadblocks. They would then say the cars were not roadworthy, or had too many passengers. The workers were not intimidated.

At the time of writing, there is still a total boycott. Workers get up at 4a.m. to walk the 15 km. from Madadeni or 25 km. from Isizweni to work. How have they achieved this?

They planned the boycott carefully. They were prepared on the Monday when the fares were raised. This ensured total unity. Hardly anyone used the buses. The workers were so well organised and united that the police could do nothing to stop the boycott continuing. The unity of the workers of Madadeni and Osizweni townships near Newcastle had set a shining example to the workers of South Africa.