



EDITORIAL

Unions Mourn Aggett

THE year 1983 will test the strength of the trade union movement. Our organisation will be attacked by retrenchment and opportunist political leadership will try and carry workers with them into the false promise of new constitutional structures. Only strong organisation and a clear political position will take FOSATU through this difficult year.

RETRENCHMENT

RETRENCHMENT shows up the so-called free market system for what it really is — a system that can never really benefit workers. How can workers accept a system which forces people out of work when there is so much hunger and poverty.

There is so much work to be done in growing food, building houses, schools hospitals and roads. There are so many willing and able hands to do this work but it lies undone and we sacrifice the needs and lives of workers so that a few can continue to make profits.

We need to produce more and not less, even if this does cause the rate of company's profits to fall.

Workers cannot continue to accept this madness and FOSATU's task is to build a powerful trade union movement that can change things to the benefit of workers. Many people are giving workers advice and they do this with good intention. People talk of organising the communities or the unemployed. But this is the wrong place to start.

Retrenchment is caused by this economic system and to fight it we need power. At this stage of our struggle workers are developing real power in organised factories and in organised industries. This will protect our members and organisation in this bad time.

Such a struggle is not easy and it does not seem to change the world tomorrow. But if we continue to grow as FOSATU has over the past three years then we will change our world.

LABOUR PARTY

THE worker struggle is not for those who have a faint heart. The decision of the Labour Party to accept the Government's proposals shows this clearly. The Labour Party has fallen into the trap that their kind of leadership always fall into. They want to convince workers there are easy ways to 'power' and are quick to accept handouts from a powerful Government. They say they will negotiate for everyone — including the 80 percent of the oppressed people who are not covered by these proposals. But as every worker knows from his trade union experience successful negotiation requires strength and the Labour Party has none. So the leadership are only accepting benefits for themselves and are prepared to sacrifice workers' interests to do this.

However, there will always be great pressure and propaganda for workers to follow behind these opportunists. In 1983 FOSATU will have to give political direction to workers which will make them determined to organise and fight the struggle for economic and political justice for all in South Africa.

THE following statement was released by the Food and Canning Workers Union to commemorate the death of Neil Aggett one year ago.

We grieve along with family, friends and colleagues at the death of our comrade. Our anger has not lessened in the year that has passed.

The events of the past year have confirmed what we know to be true. First, that the detention of Neil and other trade unionists was an attack on our union and other progressive trade unions. Once again we see that 'State Security' has been used as a smokescreen for the security police to act against trade unions.

Second, we have the evidence of the inquest of those who have been through detention and who saw Neil. Their evidence confirms for us that Neil had no reason to kill himself, but that the conditions of detention and the treatment of detainees is such that it is inevitable that there will be casualties and deaths.

As far as we are concerned there are no 'suicides' in detention, only victims. The finding of the inquest court that no-one was to blame for his death utterly offends our sense of truth and justice. We thank the detainees for their courage in coming forward to give their evidence, which will be believed by the overwhelming majority of South Africans.

It is also a matter for regret that

there have been attempts to claim Neil for this or that political purpose. In particular we distance ourselves from the award by the AFL-CIO to Neil posthumously. This award was made without consultation with the trade union movement as a whole or our union. In citation it quotes a statement made by Neil to the security police while in detention as representing Neil's views. We consider it to be a gross insult to his memory to quote from a statement made to the security police.

Neil's views are best expressed by the way he lived and worked. His integrity and dedication are still an inspiration to us. The methods of thorough organisation which he practiced, live on.

FOSATU joins with our brother in Food and Canning in mourning Neil's death. After the release of the horrific inquest verdict, FOSATU's general secretary, Joe Foster released the following statement.

FOSATU is shocked by the inquest verdict which comes in the wake of massive evidence of abuse of detainees.

The verdict will give no solace to those unfortunate enough to be taken into police custody.

We fear that until the present system of detention without trial is abolished, no enquiry or inquest after the fact will satisfy us that detention without trial and the conditions arising out of detention without trial are just.

Back From Germany



A FOSATU delegation recently returned from a two week visit to Germany where they visited major German multinationals and German trade unions. Les Kettle, NAAWU regional secretary, Charles Mkhabela MAWU representative, Abbey Cwele CWIU president and Dusty Ngwane CWIU chairman pictured here at Jan Smuts airport on their return relate some of the funnier aspects of their visit. The tour was sponsored by the FES who work with the German trade union movement.

MIGRANT LAWS USED AGAINST WORKERS

THERE is increasing evidence that the country's migrant labour laws are being used against workers in an attempt to curb union strength.

Members of the Metal and Allied Workers Union involved in a dis-

pute with Screenex found themselves confronted not only by a stubborn management but also by the might of the East Rand Administration Board.

Following discussions last year with workers at this factory near Elandsfontein in the Transvaal, management agreed to renew all migrant labour contracts. However, just before closing time they cancelled 11 call in cards.

Screenex refused to discuss the issue with workers or the union and when workers reported to work on January 3, management called in the police. Six workers were warrested and one was later charged with trespassing.

EVICTION

The company has now hired 73 migrant workers, in spite of a declared policy by ERAB that they would not register any migrant workers, and the MAWU members have been threatened with eviction from their hostels.

It appears that Government bodies are prepared to use the country's migrant labour laws against workers exercising their right to withhold their labour. Workers face not only dismissal but also loss of their accommodation.

However, Screenex workers said the factory cannot produce anything without its old workforce. Most of them have very long service and are the only ones who can set and operate the machines.

Workers have slammed the company's owners, Messrs Freissle and Rosenbusch for coming to South Africa from Germany to exploit local workers.

EXPLOIT

MAWU intends to ask all Screenex customers whether they are prepared to buy from a company which treats its workers in this way by exploiting the detested migrant labour laws. The major customers include the mines in Zimbabwe and Zambia, as well as De Beers, Anglo American Corporation and Gercor in South Africa.

Fighting Retrenchment

Retrenchment is caused by the free market system that places profit before people. But with organisation we can fight retrenchment. In FOSATU our unions are fighting for the rights set out here:

NOTICE — management must inform the union when they want to retrench workers. The more workers they want to retrench the longer the notice period must be. In Britain, for example, companies must give 90 days if 100 or more workers are affected.

INFORMATION — management must give reasons why they want to retrench — is it because of bad business, new machines, increased imports etc. We must know what steps management have taken to solve this problem. We must know how many people are affected and in what departments. We need to know the jobs done by those workers, their length of service and their ages.

NEGOTIATION — the purpose of the notice and information is to allow the union to express its views Workers themselves may have ideas as to how to solve the problems.

ONCE the decision is taken that there will be retrenchment, then steps must still be taken to keep the number of workers affected to a minimum. Our demands are:

- No overtime worked.
- Transfers to other departments if possible.
- Early voluntary retirement.
- Lay off — workers are not dismissed but instead take an extended holiday. This is particularly important for contract workers.
- Short time to be negotiated.
- No employment of casual workers.

THEN our demands are:

THE major principle unions fight for is called LIFO — which stands for Last In First Out. This ensured that people with the longest service are retrenched last.

SEVERANCE Pay — retrenchment is not the fault of workers and it, therefore must be made expensive for the company so that it is not abused. In order to achieve this FOSATU has introduced severance pay — the usual demand is that workers get a payment on top of notice pay. This payment is linked to the years of service a worker has.

PENSIONS — if a worker is on a pension scheme then the least he must get is his contribution and the company's plus interest.

BIG groups like Barlow Rand and Anglo American must try and find jobs for retrenched workers in other companies in the group.

THE names and addresses of retrenched workers must be kept and they must be the first to be re-employed if the company takes on workers again.