

COMMENT

A CLOUD of gloom has already settled, as we enter 1984. More than 2 000 workers have already been retrenched and the 1 percent rise in GST will erode away the little wage gains that workers managed to win last year. And those hard hit by last year's drought are now the victims of the floods brought on by Cyclone Domoina.

But last year, in spite of the difficult conditions of an economic recession, FOSATU unions were able, not only to survive, but also to grow stronger. It is from the unity of workers that we will draw our strength to fight the difficult battles ahead.

For this reason FOSATU remains convinced of the urgent need for unity and solidarity among the oppressed workers of South Africa. We hope that 1984 will bring about a larger united worker federation consisting of those unions really serious about worker unity.

It is obvious that employers are uniting in their attempts to curb the growth of the worker movement in this country. Word has reached us of employer organisations discussing ways to smash FOSATU unions within their area. And judging from Bophuthatswana's recent attempts to bar South African-based unions, they will receive support from these puppet homeland governments.

But FOSATU and other progressive unions will resist this with all our strength and employers will learn what it is like to face the might of united workers.

Employers must also be taught that we will not allow workers to bear the burden of the economic recession. Workers are already burdened with the increased sales tax — a tax which always hits the poor harder than the rich. On top of this, the drought and the floods have increased the families' demands on the wages of their working relatives. Yet employers call our wage demands 'unreasonable' and refuse to give us a living wage.

And why is the government increasing GST? Because its apartheid policies are expensive. The government expects we, workers, to pay for the very racist policies which oppress us! If the government and the rich capitalists want apartheid then they must pay the tax for it!

This year the government and employers will learn, once again, that workers are not donkeys which will carry any burden placed on their backs. FOSATU remains committed to the struggle for a South Africa where all workers, regardless of race, will receive a fair share of its wealth.

Bop puts ban on SA unions

BOPHUTHATSWANA has imposed a ban on South African trade unions operating on its territory.

A move which is being closely watched by a number of unions affiliated to FOSATU which over the past year have made tremendous strides in organising workers living in Bophuthatswana.

At the end of last month, the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union, the National Union of Mineworkers and the South African Allied Workers Union were informed that it is illegal for South African unions to organise within Bophuthatswana.

This ban came to light when Ucar mine, organised by NUM, and Metro Cash and Carry, organised by CCAWUSA were told by the Bophuthatswana government that they could not recognise the South African-based unions.

Apparently a new Industrial Conciliation Act is due to be tabled in the territory's 'parliament' this month which will allow for the establishment of

Bophuthatswana unions.

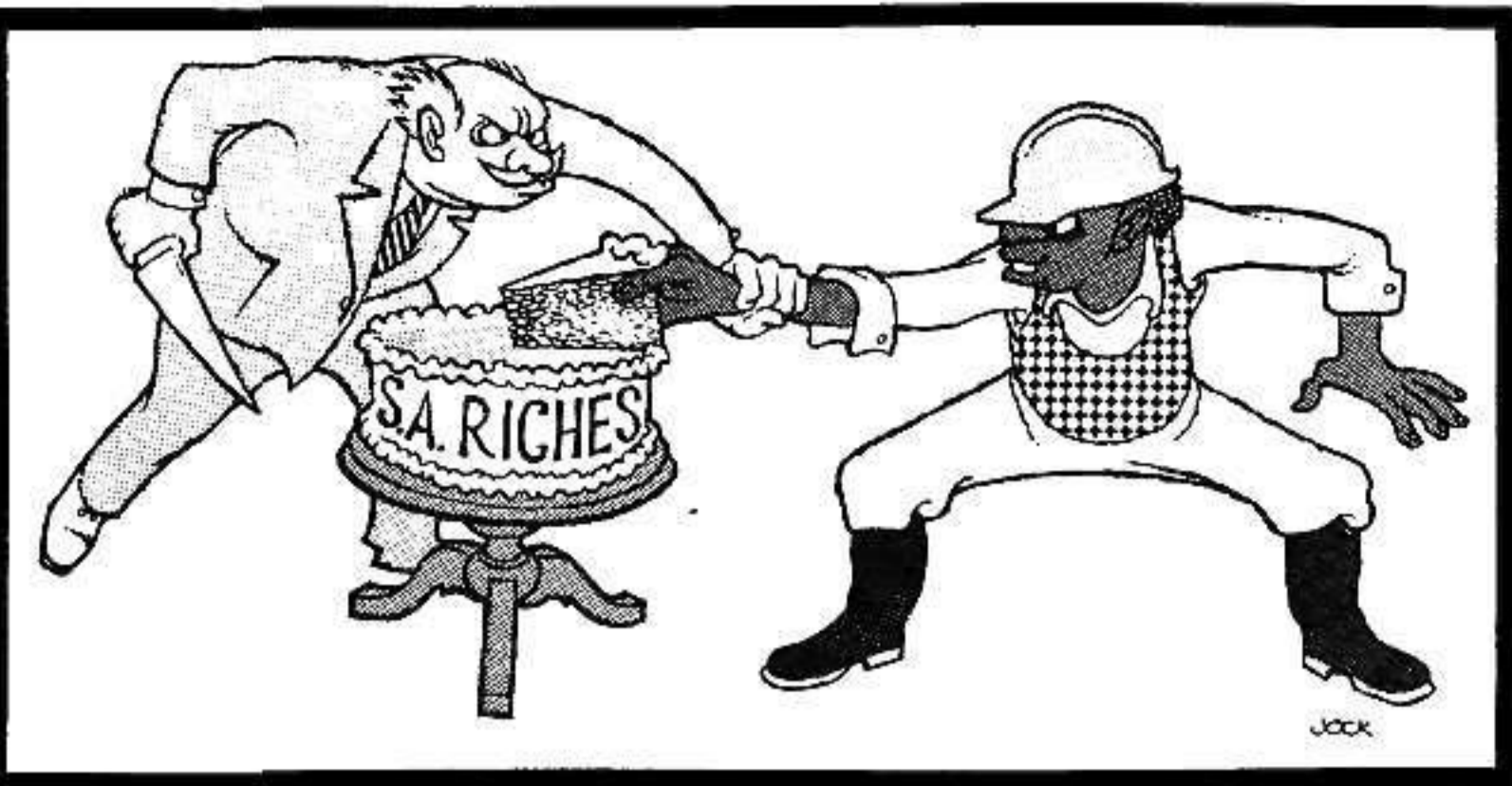
It is not clear yet whether workers living in Bophuthatswana but working within South Africa will be barred from joining South African-based unions.

IMF speaks about SA trade unions

THE continuing growth of lasting and democratic trade unions for black workers is an important step forward in the fight against apartheid.

This is according to the general secretary of the 14 million-strong International Metalworkers' Federation, Herman Rebhan.

Speaking at an international symposium on trade unions in South Africa, which was held in Dusseldorf last month, Brother Rebhan said the industrial struggles to achieve workplace rights were helping to build the self-confidence of those opposed to white minority rule.



Frame's wall begins to crack

CRACKS are beginning to appear in the wall that Frame has built to keep out the National Union of Textile Workers.

For the past year, Frame has been running from one court to another in its attempts to keep the NUTW from representing workers at its New Germany mills — but it is beginning to run out of courts.

Last year, the NUTW took Frame to the industrial court for unfairly retrenching 10 of its members at the giant Frametex mill.

One hundred members of the sweetheart Textile Workers Industrial Union were also retrenched but this union has done nothing to assist its members.

NUTW argued that Frame had not consulted with the union over the retrenchment of its members and had not stuck to the principle of Last In First Out — in fact a number of the retrenched workers had more than 20 years service.

Frame managing director,

Selwyn Lurie said in reply that the company first retrenched according to a worker's 'efficiency'.

The company then retrenched on the basis of the worker's length of service in a particular department.

NUTW attacked this saying that using efficiency as a criteria 'placed employees at the mercy of the whims of their supervisors'.

And LIFO by department allowed the company to 'rob an employee of his seniority by transferring him to another department', the union said.

A number of the workers retrenched with long service had been transferred to another department and then within ten days had found themselves retrenched — because according to Frame they had only ten days' service.

The court agreed to order the temporary reinstatement of the 10 workers but early this year Frame appealed against this

judgement.

The industrial court turned down this appeal and has once again ordered that the company either take back the workers or continue to pay them until the dispute is resolved.

Recently, the retrenched workers received R9 600 in pay — each worker was paid roughly R1 000.

In another important victory for the NUTW, the civil court recently ordered that Frame stop deducting Textile Workers Industrial Union dues from the wages of 19 Pinetex workers.

The workers had already resigned from the TWIU to join NUTW some time ago, but the company had refused to stop deducting union dues.

Hundreds of Pinetex workers have since then crossed the floor to join NUTW and unless the company stops deducting TWIU dues for these workers it will once again find itself in court.

FOSATU calls for a delay on new tax plan

THE Federation of SA Trade Unions (FOSATU) has called on the government to delay introducing the new tax plan for black workers.

Until now black workers have been subject to a different tax system to whites.

The new system, due to be introduced next month, will bring all wage earners under the same tax system.

Early this month, FOSATU officials met with senior Inland Revenue officials, Mr Clive Kingdon and Mr Hennie Smidt, to discuss the serious problems that the federation has with the new tax plan.

FOSATU said that it accepted that if people pay tax then they must be treated in the same way and not divided by race.

But it attacked the government for 'blindly' refusing to consult with worker representatives.

FOSATU general secretary, Joe Foster said that the government had been planning this new system for five years but only now does it talk to the unions — and only then because they want the unions to explain the system to black workers.

FOSATU told the Revenue

officials that workers were 'extremely' suspicious of the new tax plan particularly since tax forms were being handed out by employers.

The federation called on the government to delay the new

Wage victory after 'tough negotiations'

IN what shop stewards called 'the toughest wage negotiations we have ever had', Plate Glass workers at Germiston scored a big victory.

Ever since FOSATU's living wage policy was publicised in 1981, the Plate Glass shop stewards have been struggling to achieve a minimum wage of R2 an hour.

In the recent negotiations held in December last year, the shop stewards and workers prepared to achieve their goal.

Workers made it quite clear to their bosses that they were prepared to strike if the company refused to at least raise the minimum wages up to R2 an hour.

On the eve of the wage talks, the workers began a collection

system until all workers had a chance 'to consider it, understand it and make proposals to help improve it'.

The Inland Revenue officials agreed to take back FOSATU's call to their 'bosses'.

among themselves in order to prepare for a strike.

By collecting R10 from each worker, they managed to raise R1 780. Workers were preparing to collect more money but this became unnecessary when the management conceded a R2 an hour minimum.

The minimum wages will be raised from R1,41 to R1,80 in January and then to R2 in July — a hike of 59c per hour.

On top of this the Christmas bonus for last year and this year was raised from one week's wages to three weeks' wages.

There are now more than 10 Transvaal plants organised by the Chemical Workers Industrial Union with a minimum wage of R2.