

COMMENT

RECENT reports on just how few companies control the South African economy should come as no surprise. If you look at any capitalist economy you will find the same thing. True in South Africa the position seems even worse. But again this should be no surprise. It was monopolies that built the gold mining industry and now it is those same monopolies that have extended their power into other industries.

Yet we are told every day that in South Africa we believe in free enterprise, healthy competition and market forces. What worker can be expected to believe this fairy tale. The giant seven companies and the government itself firmly control the economy. Between these seven there is little competition but plenty of co-operation.

Only a dreamer can think of breaking down all this to bring in more competition. So all this talk of free enterprise, the market and competition has another purpose. Its purpose is to hide the success and greed of these monopolies. They wish to put the blame for inflation and unemployment on trade unions and workers who, they say, are trying to interfere with the free forces of the market.

A recent study of profits earned by companies showed that South African companies earned more profits than those in other countries around the world. The study revealed that the rates of profit were: South Africa 24,8 percent, Britain 6,8 percent, Germany 4,1 percent, Netherlands 4,7 percent, Switzerland 5,9 percent, Japan 4,1 percent and Taiwan 10,6 percent.

However, if we were to compare wages then we would find things to be the other way round - South Africa and Taiwan would be at the bottom.

So who is causing inflation? Is it the monopolies who push up prices so as to continue to earn these fat profits or is it workers who are still struggling to earn a living wage?

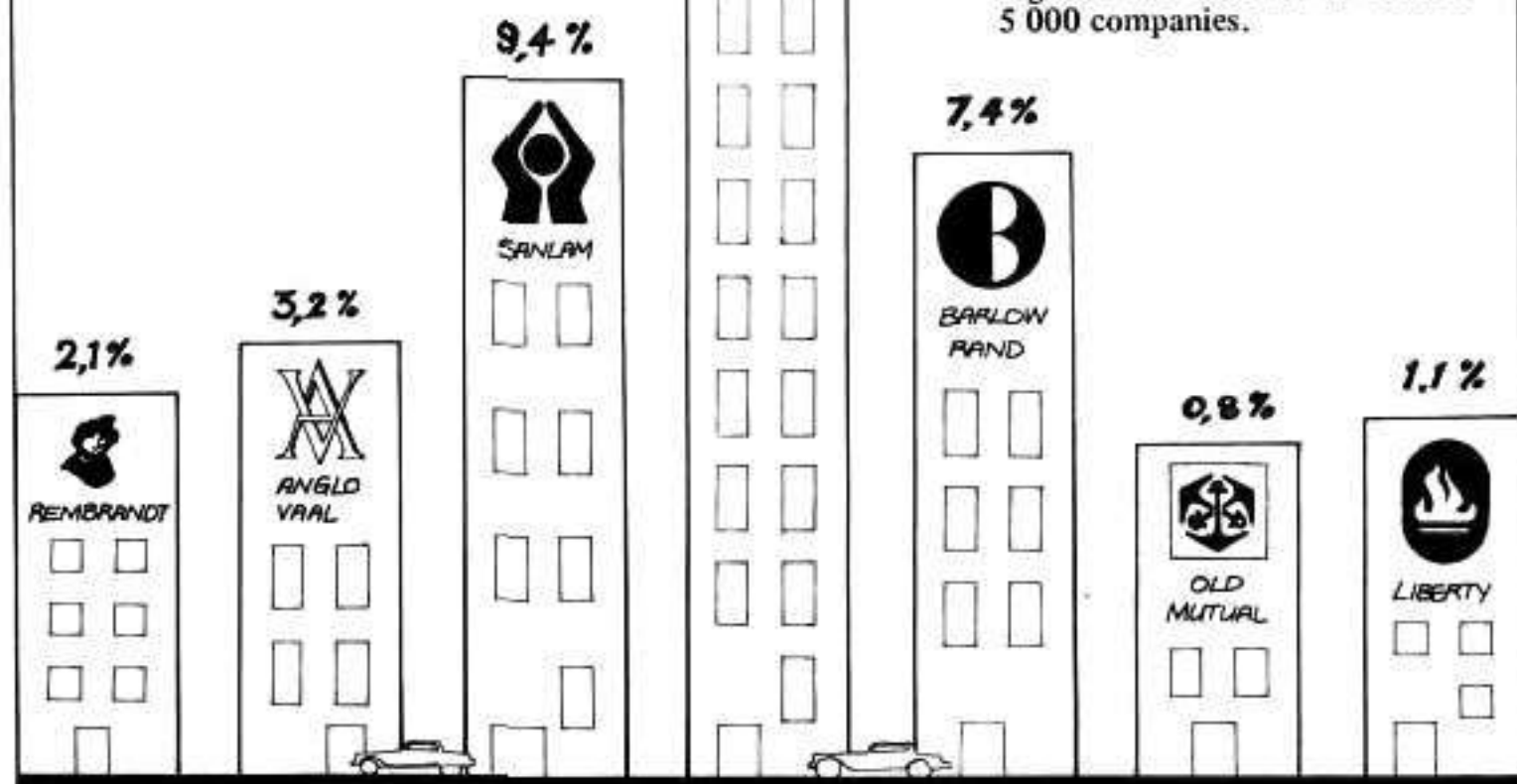
When workers ask for higher wages they are told that this will cause the company to be uncompetitive. But since there are only one or two companies monopolising most industries where is the competition? It is the high rates of profit that companies are earning that makes them uncompetitive and not higher wages.

In FOSATU we know that it is not workers causing inflation. Unlike the dreamers who weep about no competition we know this government cannot and will not control monopolies. We know that capitalism and monopolies will ever be one and the same thing.

Our job is to organise to get our share of the fat profits raked in by monopolies. However as these monopolies are found in all industries they can move their profits from one place to another. Therefore, one union can never succeed against them.

Only a well organised federation such as FOSATU based on shop floor co-operation among workers can offer any opposition to monopolies. This is why we have now begun to build Shop Steward Councils such as that for Barlow Rand - to match the power of these giants.

THE SEVEN GIANTS



Anglo American Corp
56%

THESE seven giant corporations control nearly all of South Africa's economic wealth.

Together they control close on 80 percent of all the companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

Towering over all the rest is Anglo American Corporation which alone controls a string of companies which represent 56 percent of the R90 000 million value of the Stock Exchange shares.

Even the smallest, Old Mutual with its relatively small share of 0,8 percent represents around R750 million.

Anglo, Sanlam and Old Mutual together are believed to control 5 000 companies.

Meat bosses crack

THE Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union has cracked the hard-line attitude of the management at the Cato Ridge Abattoir.

And the union is rapidly re-emerging as a powerful force among the Cato Ridge workers.

Last year SFAWU suffered a set-back when all its members were dismissed at Vleissentraal - another Cato Ridge factory.

The workers were dismissed after they struck in support of their demand for the re-instatement of five key union activists.

However, in spite of this set-back workers in the area rem-

ained loyal to SFAWU and to FOSATU.

And by early this year, the union reported that it had a majority at the State-owned Abattoir.

The union approached the company for recognition but it insisted that SFAWU extend its scope of registration to cover Cato Ridge and that it produce an audited statement proving paid up membership.

The workers rejected this, seeing it as a delaying tactic. As a result the union threatened to declare a dispute saying that

the company's unwillingness to recognise a majority union amounted to an unfair labour practice.

Recently the company backed down and has now agreed to give the union stop order facilities and has begun negotiations towards a full recognition agreement.

A Cato Ridge worker said the union had won a 'massive victory'.

'The bosses thought they had crushed us at Vleissentraal but FOSATU can never be crushed,' he said.

1 000 ATTEND CWIU'S AGM

MORE than 1 000 workers attended the successful annual general meeting of the Transvaal branch of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union.

Branch secretary, Chris Bonner said this was a splendid turn out as it represented just over a third of the paid up membership of the branch.

She said that members in each factory had donated money for the meeting and shop stewards had got together to prepare food for everyone to eat after the

meeting. 'The shop stewards had slaughtered a cow and spent all night cutting it up,' she added.

But the meeting was not without its problems.

Sister Bonner said early that morning they had heard that all meetings in the area had been banned.

Because of this the Benoni Municipality did not send their buses to pick up workers from the East Rand.

But the shop stewards and office bearers were incredibly resourceful, Sister Bonner said.

'They quickly went to the police to get permission for the meeting to continue, and arranged alternative transport for the East Rand people,' she said.

Eventually the meeting got under way.

Sister Bonner reported to members on the growth and stabilisation of the branch over the past year and of the project to organise workers at the Sasol plant near Secunda.

The union has nearly 2 000 members at Sasol, and plans to approach management at the plant were approved by the meeting.

CWIU's president, Abbey Cwele, and present general secretary, Charles Ngema, reported on the national union affairs.

Two new E Province wage deals

TWO new wage agreements have recently been negotiated in the Eastern Province.

At the Port Elizabeth Cadbury factory, the minimum wage has been hiked up by 18c.

The wages of the majority of workers have gone up from R2,16 to R2,34 per hour.

On top of this the wage agreement was backdated to July 11 so the workers received about six weeks back pay.

And at the Mercedes Benz plant in East London, the wages have been brought in line with their colleagues in the Port Elizabeth motor plants.

The workers will immediately get a 10c increase backdated to August and a further 15c increase in February next year.

The wage agreement will be renegotiated in August 1984 where the motor workers' living wage demand of R3,50 will again be the subject for the wage negotiations.

In terms of the new agreement Mercedes' workers will also get a service attendance allowance which for those with ten years service works out to be a further 10c per hour.



Chemical workers sing their way along to the annual general meeting