

# comment

## Grassroots welcomes united stand

THE history of the labour movement in South Africa has been a struggle against attempts by the state and the bosses to control and divide the workers struggle.

In the 1950's they racially divided the trade unions and banned many of the officials.

After 1973, nonracial and independent trade unions with mainly Black workers as members re-emerged and grew in strength.

Finally, in 1979 the government was forced to recognise the right of Black workers to belong to trade unions.

Once again, the bosses and the government tried to divide and control Black workers and their unions by requiring them to register and come under the control of the Department of Manpower. The unions were bitterly divided in their approach to registration.

The recent conference of nearly all the independent trade unions is therefore of great historic importance. For the first time in 20 years, workers and officials met and took a united stand against their bosses and state control in the workers struggle.

We in Grassroots welcome this stand and hope that it is the beginning of even further unity in the workers movement.

The unity of workers, if it is based on democratic control and organisation, can only be a step forward in the struggle in South Africa.

Furthermore, the decision to form regional committees to promote solidarity and cooperation between different unions is of importance to the community.

We have long supported joint community and worker struggles. If the unions can now achieve the aim of uniting the mass of their members in solidarity struggles, Grassroots organisation will undoubtedly be advanced.

## The poor suffer most

THE public has been burdened with major price increases in essential goods during the past few months.

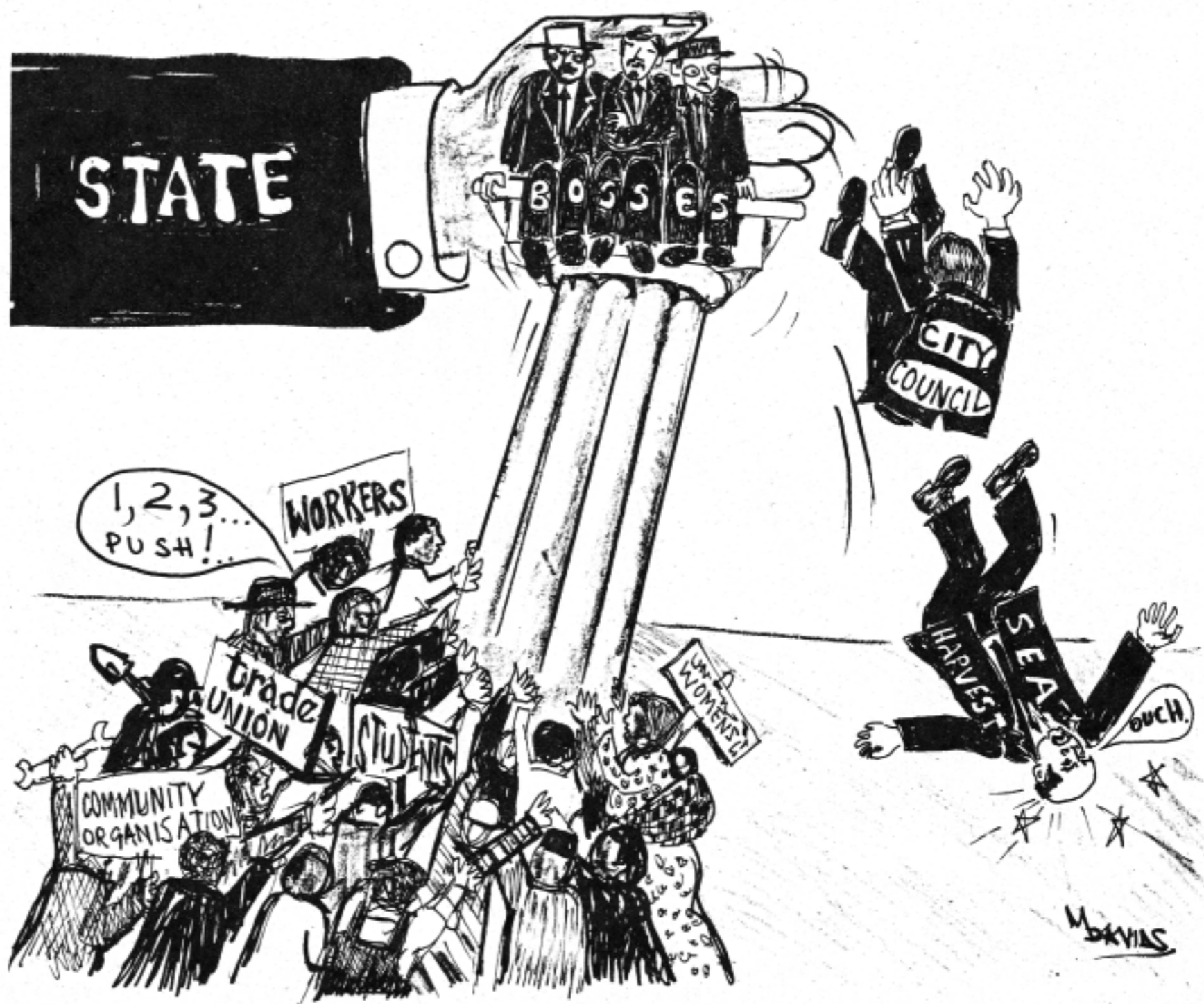
Now, working families are faced with a 33 percent bread price increase which they can ill afford. With this increase, there will be very little money left to buy other nourishing foods such as, meat and milk.

The government has once again sided with the bosses — the farmers, the millers and bakers — by allowing an increase in the price of bread in the first place. They have refused to increase the subsidy so that working people can afford to buy a loaf of bread. After all, subsidies are there to aid low-income people and not the rich.

Seventy million rand cannot be that much when the taxpayer's money is wasted on enforcing the Group Areas Act, other vicious laws, festivals and white elephants that are not even used by the majority of the people in this country.

Instead, they have passed the extra costs on to the consumers so that the bosses can make their profits.

Why should the rich be kept happy and the poor forced to bear the greatest burden of the rising cost of living?



## LETTERS

# 'We must carry on going forward'

I WANT to tell all readers of Grassroots and all women everywhere how we spent National Women's Day in Elsies River.

Although the meeting had to be moved to a new venue at the last moment, people came

in floods to the cinema in Elsies River.

It was on Saturday evening, when a few of us had gathered to cook food and to make banners and posters for the meeting that somebody came to tell us that the venue we

had prepared for the meeting would not be available.

That was bad news. But it didn't let us down. We stood up and made other efforts.

Early the next morning we put posters around the bioscope

and prepared the creche as we had invited people with their children. Buses were sent to the various areas to collect people who were waiting.

I didn't expect to see many people because of the change of

venue at the last moment but I was surprised to see that there was not a single seat empty and others were standing around the walls.

The youth started singing freedom songs for a warm-up until the meeting was declared open.

### Speaker

Our programme consisted of a guest speaker and many other speakers on behalf of workers and on the high cost of bread, rent and transport. There were plays and poetry-reading, with freedom songs in between.

Many thanks to those who partook on Sunday. I could hear the messages delivered by the speakers that people are prepared to work and organise. We are calling for the unity of the women.

It's through their help that we can go on. We need to organise ourselves everywhere. All people must stand together.

We must carry on going forward.  
Thandie Matlhare

## Union puts record straight

YOUR article on the Fattis & Monis strike (July 1981 issue) contains a statement we feel should be corrected.

It says the Food & Canning Workers Union was not represented on the support committee formed to boycott Fattis & Monis products.

It suggests that the Union made the mistake of handing over the organisation of the

boycott to other organisations.

This is not true at all.

It was the Union that convened the support committee. This was long after the strike, and the boycott, had started, when we saw the need for organisations to co-ordinate their efforts. Several workers on strike were on this committee, and represented at all its meetings.

More important still, the Union was almost solely responsible for checking how strong the boycott was.

In short, although our Union did not publicly claim responsibility for the boycott, it did a great deal of the work.

Our thinking was then — and still is — that community organisations and not the Union should take the lead in the boycott.

For us, the boycott

was support action, to force the bosses to negotiate with us.

If we had claimed responsibility for the boycott, it would have been that much more difficult for the bosses to negotiate with us.

Our strength was to be able to say that the boycott was a response of mass support, on the part of a wide range of people.

Secretary  
FCWU