

# Nationalisation of the mines is the only option - Motlatsi

THE MINING INDUSTRY MUST BE RESTRUCTURED AND THE MINES NATIONALISED SO AS TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF ADDRESSING THE ECONOMIC ILLS OF OUR COUNTRY, SO SAYS JAMES MOTLATSI, PRESIDENT OF THE NUM IN AN INTERVIEW WITH NUM NEWS. HERE WE PUBLISH EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW.

NUM NEWS: Since the 1989 Congress, political changes seem to have affected the NUM political policy?

JAMES MOTLATSI: It is true that the political organisations have been unbanned. De Klerk is trying to remove the apartheid laws from the statute books. The removal of racist laws from the statute books will not necessarily bring about socio-economic changes that are needed to change the standards of living of the masses.

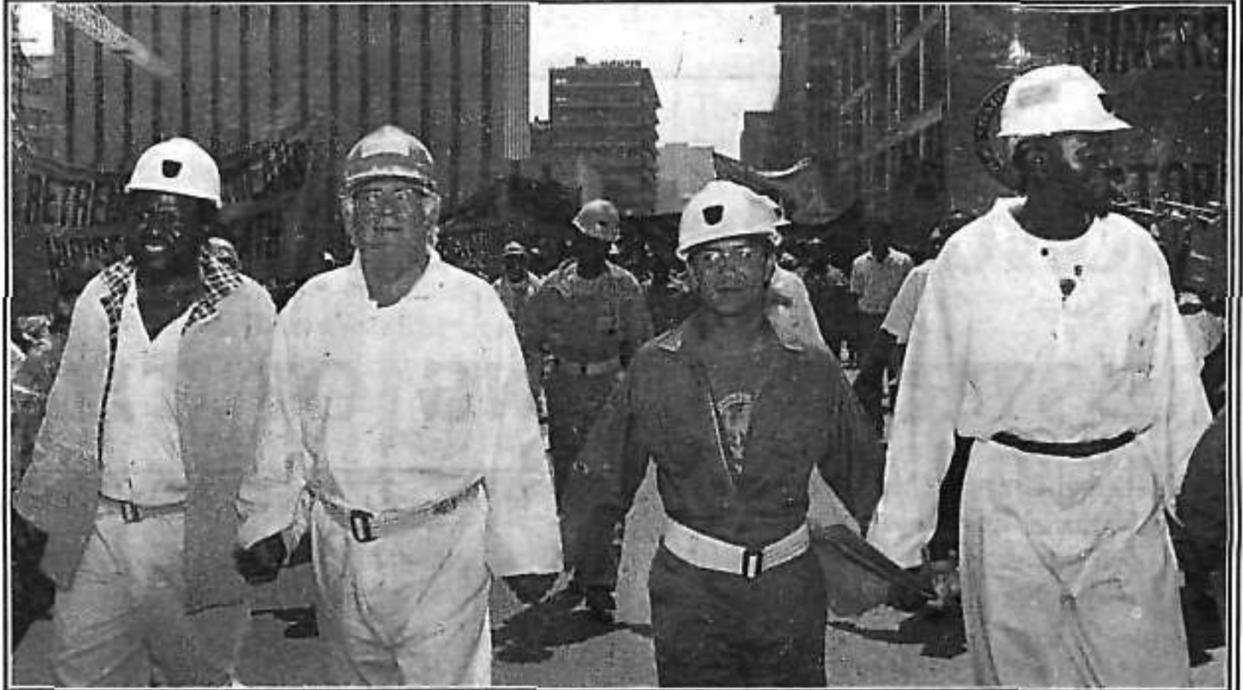
NN: What role could mineworkers play in influencing political changes?

JM: Mineworkers would have to join the ANC and the South African Communist Party, not only as card-carrying members but to play an active role in realising their aims and objectives

NN: What is your view about the adoption of the Freedom Charter?

JM: The Freedom Charter is still our guiding document - more so where it addresses the question of monopolies. Nationalisation of the mines is still the best option to address the question. We are however of the opinion that such a policy will have to be implemented over a long period of time. Only a democratically elected government will be included in such policy implementation. The Nationalist government has not only failed to redress the situation, but has helped in creating the mass of impoverished blacks that has existed for so many decades.

NN: Has the NUM succeeded in eliminat-



Leading the march against retrenchments; from left to right are: James Motlatsi, Joe Slovo, Marcel Golding and Paul Nkuna

ing discrimination on the mines?

JM: Yes, we have made progress, but it is still a thorny issue which will continue for a long time even after a new government has come to power.

The mining industry is the cornerstone of the apartheid structure and mineworkers have a long way to go before all can be said to be well because they are fighting both the government and mine bosses.

NN: What is your view on retrenchments?

JM: In the short term the NUM and management can negotiate and agree on ways of alleviating the problems of retrenchment. The Chamber of Mines is not prepared to comply with our demands because the more

people are out of work, the better it is for them, because their calls for the lifting of sanctions will become louder in the name of creating more jobs. Mismanagement and economic plunder of the country's mineral wealth by mine bosses is the main cause of retrenchments and the resultant suffering of mineworkers

NN: What solutions do you suggest to the mining industry's problems?

JM: Restructuring of the mining industry is the only option.

NN: What is your opinion about the amount paid to retrenched workers?

JM: Mineworkers are among the lowest paid workers in South Africa; even if they were to be given four weeks wages for each year of completed service, the money would be very little and not enough to sustain the same standard of living before being retrenched.

NN: What about the R1million that Anglo American Corporation has set aside for such purposes?

JM: It is an insult to give such a small amount to a cause that would need hundreds of millions of rands. Although the mineworkers have toiled, suffered and paid dearly with their lives to produce the wealth of this country, their reward is nothing short of failing to recognise that they are also human beings who have dependants.

NN: Do you think the government can help to minimise the impact of retrenchments?

JM: The present government will never do anything like that because it is well known that they have for decades it has prospered on the exploitation of the black masses. The more blacks suffer the more they are in a good position to dominate the political scene and remain in total control.

NN: What, in your view, is the solution to our economic ills?

JM: Total restructuring of the mining industry followed by nationalisation of the mines will go a step further in solving these ever-increasing problems.

## German miners shocked by SA mineworkers conditions

"Mineworkers unions all over the world demand the abolition of apartheid and they demand sanctions to bring about real change."

This was a clear message from German Miners Union (IGBE) representative comrade Hegel in his address to an NUM meeting recently held to bid them farewell.

Comrade Hegel and three others had visited South Africa as guests of the NUM for about a month.

Comrade Hegel told the meeting about the German miners support for the anti-apartheid struggle.

"Comrades, no country on earth is too far for us to be inclined to ignore violations of human and trade union rights.

"Our campaign 'Solidarity against apartheid' started in 1984. Photo exhibitions and special news sheets were produced.

"Youth clubs campaigned against loans from German banks for the apartheid regime, others printed T-shirts to be sold to raise money for a special fund", comrade Hegel said. German miners were determined to extend their struggle of solidarity to mineworkers in all countries which had to fight oppressive conditions like in South Africa.

Hegel expressed his shock at conditions under which mineworkers live. He said: "Our first week in South Africa showed us the dismal situation of people living in squatter camps in this country.

"On our visits we found many mineworkers suffering from miserable working conditions. These results in many comrades having accidents, being injured and even killed."

He further told the meeting that such conditions could only be removed when all the people of this country realise equal rights.

"We want to see a new democratic, free and socially just South Africa. We as mineworkers unions are prepared to work hard for these aims", he concluded.