

VICTORY IS CERTAIN



Victory is certain, says the banner — and workers show through their singing that the writing is on the wall for PW Botha's government.



All pictures on this page were taken by Paul Wainberg of AFRAPIX



The president, James Motlatsi is lifted up high by happy supporters during NUM's rally.

Away with slavery — let's take control

MINeworkers must take greater control of their lives and build worker unity in all areas, said Comrade James Motlatsi, president of the National Union of Mineworkers, at the union's fifth annual congress.

In his presidential address to the congress, attended by 600 delegates from 12 regions, Cde Motlatsi said that only when mineworkers and the working class take control of their lives at all levels will we be able to solve the problems facing this country.

He said the NUM has come a long way since it was formed, even though the mine owners and the state had done their utmost to try and crush it.

"We have fought for our rights to exist. Hostile managements, repressive mine security and police have not stopped mineworker unity and organisation," he said.

"Disciplined action, brave leadership by our shaft stewards and the general courage of our rank and file have been the reasons for our survival."

Cde Motlatsi said the country was in a deep-rooted economic, political and ideological crisis which has seen over 20 000 people die during the State of Emergency.

"South Africa's economic crisis is one of mismanagement and investment which has not improved the conditions for the vast majority of people," said Cde Motlatsi.

He added that the rural areas had become poorer, while in the city the social needs of the working class — such as housing and transport — have not been met.

Other aspects of the crisis include:

- Deepening recession.
- The number of unemployed workers has increased to over 3-million.
- The price of food and other goods continues to go up.
- Money is not spent on the social needs of the people, but on the military and police.

Cde Motlatsi added that while there is a crisis, it is not one of profitability — the employers have still made big profits.

"What the crisis has done is put the control of the economic resources in fewer and fewer hands."

"It is the working class and the oppressed people who have suffered the brunt of the crisis."

Cde Motlatsi said the government has failed miserably in mandating the State of Emergency because of the mass struggles of the people.

He said it is clear that the government is totally rejected and cannot ride in the tide any more.

"The initiative now lies with the oppressed people, with the organised working class — under the leadership of COSATU — having an important responsibility."

On taking control of the

hostels, Cde Motlatsi said the mineowners have kept workers in terrible living conditions.

"The migrant labour and bonded system have robbed us of our dignity and broken up our families."

"The empire of the mineowners has been built on the blood, sweat and toil of black workers. Workers' rewards have been low wages, and unhealthy and dangerous working conditions. And many comrades have paid the price of death at the hands of the capitalist system."

Cde Motlatsi warned the mineowners that they must publicly admit that they have benefited from the hostels, and will abolish them. He called on them to start negotiating with the NUM on the removal of the hated system or face organised worker action.

"1987 is the year NUM will begin to change the way we will fight every inch of the way."

He added that because so many workers have died in mine violence in the recent past, miners should take their security and safety into their own hands.

"The security and defence of our members has now become a priority. We are calling on mineworkers to take their safety into their own hands."

"Defence committees must be established in every mine to guarantee the safety of all workers against attacks."

The president also urged workers to fight for the health and safety bill of rights, and criticised the Chamber of Mines for refusing to negotiate on this issue.

On the living wage campaign, Cde Motlatsi encouraged volunteers to come forward and build united action in every shaft, mine hostel room and block.

"The living wage campaign is the first phase of our struggle for a better distribution of wealth of this country."

In conclusion, Cde Motlatsi said the solution to workers' problems was clear — they must take control of their workplace.

He said that under capitalism, there will never be a solution.

"It is only in a democratic socialist South Africa that the working class and all the oppressed people will control the wealth they produce."

To achieve this, he said, required the organisation of the mass of people.

"Trade unions on their own cannot achieve this task. It also requires the organisation of the youth, women and communities."

"It is only through democratic organisation, armed with a clear vision and the courage for action, that we will bring freedom nearer."

"Let us not shirk this task as mineworkers. 1987 is the year we take control and build for the future."



Joining in the singing: NUM vice-president Elijah Sazayi, general secretary Cyril Ramaphosa and COSATU general secretary Jay Naidoo.

If the bosses won't abolish hostels, we will

IN WHAT was clearly the biggest political gathering since the State of Emergency was declared, more than 350 000 mineworkers said "NO!" to the government and mine bosses controlling their lives.

They also declared 1987 the year mineworkers take control.

This fifth annual conference was very important in that mineworkers firmly stated their political position and their stand on sanctions, taxation (without representation) and the labour relations Act.

Mineworkers want to control their own lives at the places of work and in the compounds.

The workers also told the government and the bosses that the migrant labour system must be scrapped to allow workers to live with

their wives at their places of employment.

They demanded that the bosses state clearly that they will scrap the migrant labour system.

The migrant labour system has been responsible for breaking up families and relationships and the destruction of workers' lives in single sex hostels.

Through these laws, workers have been subjected to horrible living conditions.

The workers gave a clear warning to the bosses that they must start talking to the NUM about dismantling these unjust laws.

The bosses must also hand over the running of hostels to the workers themselves.

Workers resolved that if the government did not listen to their demands, they would "seize control of the mines."

They demanded that the running of the hostels be taken away from the privately-elected and management favoured lodgers and handed over to representatives elected democratically by the workers themselves.

The workers also demanded that they control occupational facilities.

Workers have realised that managements have been unable to protect their lives and property from vigilante attacks. They have discovered that management sometimes seems to encourage attacks, to break the union's strength.

In order to stop this, workers decided to form defence committees on the mines to defend mineworkers against management-sanctioned vigilante attacks.

Workers promised not to

be answerable to their community.

The workers also came out in support of sanctions and have warned the bosses not to deduct income tax and money for unemployment insurance funds.

Workers pointed out that they have no say in the running of the government and can therefore not decide how and where their taxes are spent.

They also demanded that:

- May 1 and June 16 should be paid holidays.
- All political prisoners and detainees should be released.

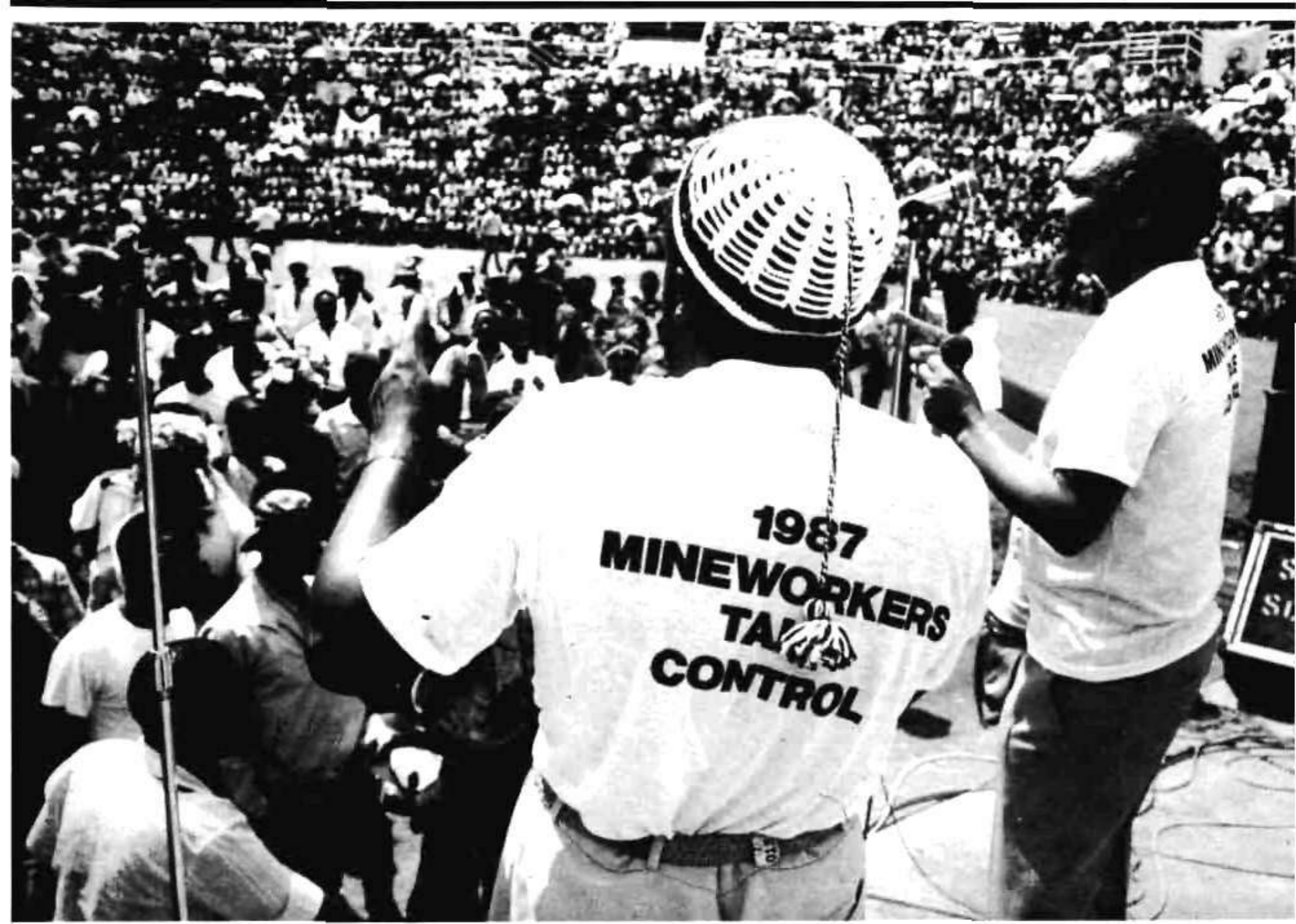
The workers are also going to demand a 55 percent wage increase and will refuse to work overtime.

The workers have endorsed COSATU's campaign for a living wage.



Wearing a Sacta T-shirt, a delegate makes a point during discussions.





Miners sing their praises during the fifth annual congress.

COMMENT

The NUM's fifth annual congress has clearly pointed the way forward. If we are to rid ourselves of the evils of apartheid and capitalism, then the working class and the oppressed people must take control of society.

This task must start now. We must build strong democratic organisations controlled by the working people in all areas of our lives. That is the only guarantee of a better future for ourselves and our families.

Mineworkers will start that process.

In 1987, we intend to take control of our lives. We will take control of the hostels with or without the involvement of the mineowners. We will destroy this hated system of migrant labour and hostels.

We have accepted the Freedom Charter as the guiding document in our struggle against oppression and exploitation. We believe the struggle for freedom from national oppression is fundamental in the struggle for a socialist South Africa controlled by the working class. In this great task, the maximum mobilisation of all the oppressed people and patriotic forces is necessary. Unity and joint action to defeat apartheid and capitalism are our tasks.

The Living Wage Campaign is part of this action, too.

The state's ban on meetings to discuss the campaign will not stop us. The state's continued involvement in labour matters will only result in more politicising of labour.

The bosses, too, have remained very silent — which is expected, since the state remains its most trusted partner in maintaining the workers in conditions of oppression and exploitation.

Workers will not stop mobilising. Our demand for a living wage is part of our struggle for a better distribution of the wealth of our country.



1987 — the year mineworkers take control

