

Labor Against Apartheid

Spring 1986, Vol. 3, No. 2

Africa for USA!

Africa for USA. Don't we mean USA for Africa? Not in this case. On February 28, 350 South African workers at the 3M plant in Elandsfontein near Johannesburg staged a half-day walkout in solidarity with 3M workers whose plant is being closed in Freehold, New Jersey.

The 3M Company, based in Minnesota, decided last year to shut down its Freehold operation, which produces audio/video tapes and employs 450 workers. Their union—Local 8-760 of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers—offered to negotiate with the company to keep the plant open, but 3M refused to consider any options.

Local 8-760, with the help of New York's Labor Institute, then launched a major public relations campaign to bring 3M's behavior to the attention of the larger community. The campaign enlisted the support of rock star Bruce Springsteen, a native of Freehold, whose current hit "My Hometown" is about the economic decline of the town he grew up in. Together with Willie Nelson and other recording artists, Springsteen helped the local tell their story through national newspaper ads.

The South Africa connection was made when a member of the NY Labor Committee Against Apartheid told the Local about Emma Mashinini, president of the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA), which represents the largely black workforce at 3M South Africa operations. Ms. Mashinini made a solidarity tour of the States last year, sponsored by LCAA. Freehold workers were able to contact Ms. Mashinini and CCAWUSA members went into action.

In December, CCAWUSA's bargaining team walked into a

negotiating session with 3M wearing T-shirts that read: "Don't Abandon Freehold, My Hometown," and "No Retreat-No Surrender," taken from two Springsteen songs. Needless to say, management was shocked.

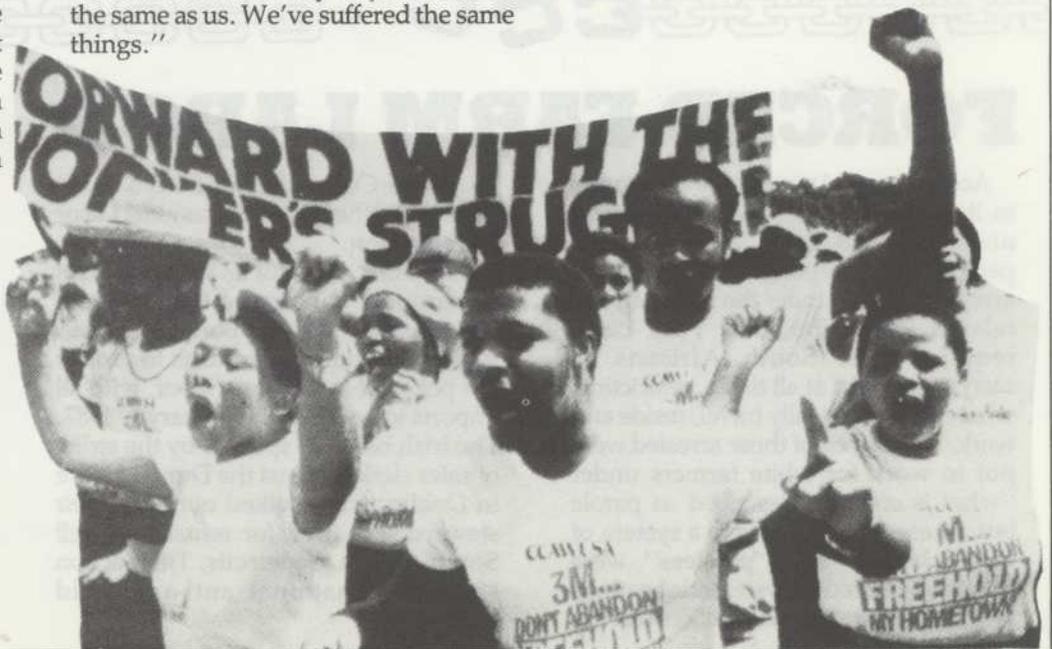
And February 28, the day after 3M laid off the first 160 workers in Freehold, the entire black workforce of the Elandsfontein plant walked off their jobs at 1 p.m., all 250 wearing the Freehold T-shirts. The South African workers marched, singing and dancing, around the plant and then held a solidarity rally to protest the Freehold shutdown. According to wire service reports, white workers in nearby offices looked on in amazement.

African workers explained why they stopped work, at the cost of a half-day's pay. "I'm upset and sorry for those people," stated Sidney Skosana, "and they have supported us before." Bafana Dhlamine said, "They're just workers the same as us. We've suffered the same things."

The struggle started in Freehold is far from over, even if the last jobs at the plant disappear in June. Workers in the US and South Africa are learning that to deal with a global system of production, labor solidarity must be international and new networks must be built linking workplaces and unions. On Thursday, May 29, from 4-10 p.m., New Jersey Artists for Mankind are holding a concert rally in the East Freehold Park to highlight these efforts and to continue support for the Freehold 3M workers. Emma Mashinini is planning to attend—all the way from South Africa.

CCAWUSA is also sending a representative from the Elandsfontein plant to the US in early summer to join with Local 8-760 president Stanley Fisher in a national "Hometowns Against Shutdowns" tour. The tour will

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ECONOMY DOWN, MILITANCY UP.

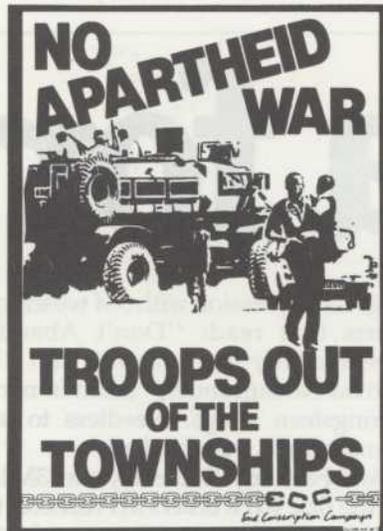
South Africa's faltering economy has compounded the hardship faced by black workers under the apartheid labor system. According to official reports, at least 1,000 workers lost their jobs each week in 1985. Unemployment in the Eastern Cape area, particularly Port Elizabeth and East London, now averages 60%, fueled by layoffs in the auto industry.

At the same time, reports from researchers at the University of Cape Town indicate that real wages are falling drastically in the face of 20% inflation. During 1985, 23% of all workers received no wage increases and 91% of all workers experienced a decline in real wages (purchasing power). These figures represent the worst wage erosion in a decade and are markedly worse than in 1984, when 16% received no wage increases, 57% saw real wages fall, and 43% saw real wages rise.

The newest government budget indicates how the Botha regime intends to respond to growing economic distress. The budget projects an increase of 20% in military spending and 12% in police spending. The budget includes a 62% increase in allocations for counter-insurgency training. The United Democratic Front (UDF) stated that the regime's budget priorities will further depress employment and real wages for black workers, intensifying labor protests.

The UDF's prediction is backed by reports showing a continued rise in

militancy and solidarity among black workers. According to industrial relations experts, there has been a sharp increase in job actions during the first two months of 1986. Over 185,000



workdays were lost in January alone—double the number reported a year before. More than half the strikes occurred in the mining industry. Figures confirm that the strike wave has mounted steadily since 1984.

A rising number of job actions are politically focused. On March 21, thousands of black unionists across the country held a work stoppage to commemorate the victims of police massacres in Sharpeville (1960) and Langa (1985). The stoppage was called by the new labor federation COSATU. A

memorial rally near the site of the Langa massacre was attended by 35,000 and received a message from Winnie Mandela urging increased defiance of the regime.

Job actions have also been spreading from industrial centers into the service sector. A dramatic struggle occurred in Soweto when more than 1,700 auxilliary workers and student nurses went on strike at the Baragwanath Hospital, which serves the two million residents of the black township outside Johannesburg. The strikers were immediately fired. Police and army troops surrounded the area and attempted to force the workers back to their jobs, injuring several. Doctors and other professional staff then threatened to join the strike if administration officials refused to meet with them about the situation. Meanwhile, police arrested 700 workers for striking "illegally" and soldiers rounded up another 300 strikers, forcing them to collect their final paychecks at gunpoint.

In response, the workers signed affidavits documenting this coercion and turned the paychecks over to their union, the General and Allied Workers. The union returned the wages to the hospital. Later the Supreme Court reinstated the workers, ruling that their dismissal had been illegal since the firings had been made retroactive to a date before the strike began. The troops which had taken over hospital duties were pulled out of the hospital.

JUNE 14 MARCH

Thousands of labor, church, and community members in the New York area will join together in a March Against Apartheid on Saturday, June 14. The march is scheduled to start from the UN's Dag Hammarskjold Plaza and the Harlem State Office Building, rallying at the Great Lawn in Central Park. Sponsors include the Citywide Anti-Apartheid Coordinating Council, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and the NY Labor Committee Against Apartheid. Several benefit events are planned to support the march, which will also be held in other major cities. For updates on plans for June 14, please contact: Mae Ngai, District 65/UAW, (212) 673-5120.

FORCED FARM LABOR

According to Amnesty International, in its study *South Africa: Imprisonment under the Pass Laws*, some 238,000 persons were reported to have been arrested in 1984 under the Pass Laws or related legislation. The Pass Laws require black South Africans to carry passbooks at all times, restricting where they can legally travel, reside and work. Thousands of those arrested were put to work for white farmers under "what is officially described as parole but, in essence, is closer to a system of forced labor." The "parolees" were often subjugated to systematic beatings and humiliation. These practices directly

violate the Convention on Forced Labor adopted by the UN's International Labor Organization.

In the first action of its kind, the Irish government announced that it would progressively ban imports of South African agricultural products to protest the policy of forced farm labor, with all imports to be cut off by January 1, 1987. The Irish ban was spurred by the strike of sales clerks against the Dunnes Store in Dublin, who walked out after their steward was fired for refusing to sell South African grapefruits. Their action sparked a national anti-apartheid campaign.

Labor *Against* Apartheid

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American labor solidarity against South Africa's apartheid system gained a new dimension with the launching in January of a nationwide boycott against the Shell Oil Company. The boycott has been called by the AFL-CIO, the United Mineworkers (UMWA) and the Free South Africa Movement. It has rapidly gained the endorsement of anti-apartheid, civil rights and women's organizations across the country.

Shell has a notoriously dismal record in South Africa, with extensive involvement in the apartheid economy. Despite an international oil embargo against South Africa, this multinational corporation is still a major supplier of oil to South African business and government, including the military and police forces. At the same time, Shell has maintained numerous investments in the petroleum refining, chemical and mining industries there.

The issue that triggered the boycott was Shell's firing in 1985 of 86 coal miners at its Rietspruit mine, after workers took one hour off to attend a memorial service for a miner who had been killed on the job. The firings were aimed particularly at shop stewards and union activists. Management subsequently banned workplace union meetings and has prohibited any contact between shop stewards and members.

The South African National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), which represents the Rietspruit miners, immediately protested these union-busting tactics and appealed for an international boycott of all Shell products. The Miners International Federation, together with many unions worldwide, have voiced their solidarity with the Rietspruit miners by endorsing boycott actions and organizing public events to expose Shell's anti-labor, pro-apartheid policies.

In the US, the Shell Boycott is being built by union members on the community level. The UMWA offers these suggestions for local campaigns:

BOYCOTT SHELL!



Start a "Boycott Shell" committee in your local union or community group. Contact area churches, civic organizations, civil rights groups and other union locals to let them know about the boycott and join with your committee.



Research Shell products in your area, identifying Shell gas stations, retailers that sell Shell's automotive and home products, government agencies which buy Shell heating oil, businesses issuing Shell credit cards to employees, and local politicians receiving campaign contributions from Shell.



Organize actions to make the boycott known to consumers. Actions can include: passing out leaflets at Shell gas stations; sending delegations to local merchants asking them to remove Shell products and display signs saying "This business supports the Shell boycott;" letter writing campaigns to employers using Shell credit cards or heating oil; letter writing and delegations to politicians requesting they condemn Shell's complicity with apartheid. Be sure to also let friends and neighbors, church or club members know about the consumer boycott.

SHELL PRODUCTS INCLUDE:

Gasoline, gas additives, motor oils, lubricants, tires, batteries, radios, oil filters, repair services, auto and furniture polish,

insecticides, room deodorizers, air fresheners and roofing materials. Look for the Shell emblem—and boycott the product!

COSATU: A GIANT STEP FORWARD.

The formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in November 1985 represents a new stage of unity and influence for the South African labor movement. COSATU joins 500,000 union members in every region of the country into one federation. Its 33 affiliates represent every major sector of the workforce, from basic industry to public employment. Member unions include South Africa's largest labor organizations, the National Union of Mineworkers, the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union, and the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

Just as importantly, COSATU is a new political force in the battle against apartheid and for the democratic reconstruction of South Africa.

COSATU embodies the principles of a democratic South Africa in its own structure and platform, drafted at the Inaugural Congress. COSATU's founding slogan is "One Federation, One Country," representing its commitment to a unified labor movement and its insistence that South Africa is one society, which cannot be divided, segregated, or partitioned on racial and ethnic lines. COSATU is committed to non-racialism, opening its unions to white as well as black workers.

Another cornerstone of COSATU is "One Union, One Industry." In coming months, its affiliates will merge to create a single national union for each of ten employment sectors. Upholding the principle of industrial unionism, locals include members from all skills and classifications. COSATU's guiding motto is "An injury to one is an injury to all."

The new federation and its affiliates are also pledged to worker-controlled unions, stressing the importance of the shop steward system and shopfloor decision-making. An important goal is

strengthening worker education programs at the national, regional and local levels to promote union democracy. Such programs will also emphasize cultural activities, including the demand that May 1 be recognized as a national workers' holiday commemorating international solidarity and the traditions of labor struggle. May Day—which began as a tribute to America's Haymarket martyrs in the fight for the eight-hour day one hundred years ago—is now a key symbolic issue in South African bargaining.

Organizing the unorganized is also a central part of COSATU's platform. The federation currently encompasses 15% of South Africa's black workforce, all organized in the six years since the government granted official recognition of labor unions. Unions are growing rapidly in every industrial sector, but COSATU also plans to form a union for agricultural workers and a union for the unemployed, recognizing every worker's right to a job and security.

The rights of women workers emerged as a key issue at the Inaugural Congress and resolutions included programs to combat discrimination within the federation as well as in the workforce and society. One resolution called for equal pay for all work of equal value—the principle of comparable worth. Other resolutions called for day care facilities, maternity leave, protection against sexual harassment, and a worker-controlled subcommittee to ensure implementation of these demands.

In its national labor program, COSATU calls for a minimum living wage for all South African workers, a 40-hour work week at full pay, a ban on overtime, and the legal right to strike. The Congress condemned apartheid's migrant labor system, specifically the Pass Laws and Influx Control Laws.

These laws regulate where blacks can work, reside and travel. The laws divide workers into permanent residents and migrants, separate workers from their families, and make workers virtual captives of their employers. The Congress also called for abolishing the homeland or "bantustan" system, which forces blacks to live on bleak and remote reservations, displaced from their own land, ethnically segregated, and dependent on migrant work.

COSATU's political platform demands that all troops and security forces be withdrawn from black townships, that all political prisoners and detainees be released, that all bans on individuals and organizations be removed, and that government be constituted on the principle of "one person, one vote." COSATU has declared its support for all forms of international pressure on the South African government, including disinvestment by foreign firms. The federation has also pledged its solidarity with the labor movements of other Southern African countries and seeks to build bilateral relations with unions in common industries around the world.

COSATU members know better than anyone the enormous struggle ahead to make their vision a reality in South Africa. One of the most urgent tasks is to combat ethnic and regional divisions among black workers, which are constantly exploited by apartheid's rulers. A second challenge is to deepen the links between COSATU's strong base in the workplace and the current upsurge of protest in black communities. But the very existence of COSATU, in the face of apartheid's ruthless oppression, is confirmation that South African workers are moving history forward.

The leaders of Cosatu.

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE



MINEWORKERS TAKE THE LEAD

Perhaps only veterans of America's coalfield wars in the 1930s can really imagine the conditions of struggle in South Africa's mines today. Under apartheid, black miners are hired as migrant workers, paid one-tenth the wages of white miners, made to live in single-sex hostels (barracks) at the mines, policed by both mine operators and the government. Though their labor has built the wealth and power of white South Africa, black miners are "expendable" workers in a forced labor system.

Black miners are also the largest organized sector of South Africa's emerging labor movement. In the six years since unions gained official recognition, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) has grown to 250,000 members and has conducted over half of all job actions in the country. NUM played a key role in the formation of the new labor federation, COSATU, whose first president is NUM leader Elijah Barayi.

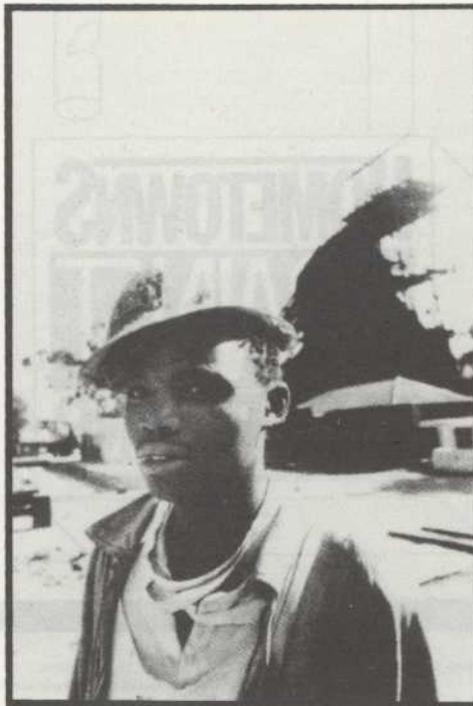
The following reports do not give a complete picture of the miners' struggle, but they do convey what it takes to build a democratic labor movement in South Africa:

Over 30,000 African miners went on strike at five platinum mines in January, demanding higher wages, better working conditions, and recognition of the NUM. The mines are owned by the General Mining Corporation (GENCOR) and are located in Bophuthatswana, an area declared an "independent homeland" by the South African government. Bophuthatswana, which is not recognized as a state outside South Africa, bars non-"homeland" unions from operating in its territory. GENCOR's mines there account for 60% of the platinum produced in the Western world.

Declaring the strike "illegal," GENCOR immediately dismissed 20,000 strikers, in what may be the largest mass firing in South Africa since the labor conflicts of the 1920s. GENCOR is known in business circles as the "most hardline and implacable industrial relations operator." NUM has designated GENCOR as an "enemy company" because it has persistently used firings to break strikes. The union is planning an international corporate

campaign targeting GENCOR...

The Anglo-American Corporation has admitted to the existence of a teargas smoke system installed in the liquor store, hostel kitchen and administrative buildings of its Western Deep Levels gold mine. The system, designed for use in the event of "unrest" among African mineworkers, is also operational at a mine in Klerksdorp owned by GENCOR. Management at Anglo-American confirmed this information after the former Prime Minister of Australia, Malcolm Fraser, charged that systems for pumping disabling gas into South African miners quarters had been installed. Mine company officials now claim the systems have been dismantled...



In March, 19,000 African miners held a three-day work slowdown at the Vaal Reefs mine, the world's largest gold mine owned by the Anglo-American Corporation. The job action protested the arrest of several miners during a strike the month before over the killing of black supervisors. The action was also prompted by the mass firing of black workers several months earlier and by longstanding grievances over hostel conditions and discriminatory practices.

During the March action, clashes broke out between different ethnic groups at the mine, killing seven African miners and injuring eight others. Similar ethnic clashes had occurred earlier and NUM officials blamed Anglo-American for instigating these incidents in order to get rid of trade union activists...

The South African government has revealed that it is preparing contingency plans to expel foreign migrant workers in response to international economic sanctions against South Africa. There are currently 1.5 million foreign workers in South Africa, largely from African border states. The threat to expel them is seen as a punitive move by the government to shift the burden of sanctions onto border states, while sowing division in the workforce.

The NUM, which represents 150,000 foreign mineworkers, has called the threat of expulsion "provocative" and has vowed that such a threat will "not go unchallenged." The NUM has joined with mineworkers' leaders from Zambia, Botswana, Lesotho and Zimbabwe to form the Southern African Miners' Federation. The new federation has resolved to resist with militant action any repatriation move by the South African government...

At NUM's 1986 Annual Congress in February, the union decided to call a national strike later in 1986 unless the South African Chamber of Mines agrees to an industry-wide wage agreement. The NUM Congress also decided that miners would unilaterally observe this May Day as a public holiday, a demand employers have refused to negotiate in the past. The Congress adopted the longterm demand that employers dismantle the worker hostels at the mines and replace them with villages that could accommodate families. The demand is seen as a direct challenge to South Africa's migrant labor system and a prod to mine owners who say they deplore the system. Responding to the rising protest movement in black townships, the Mineworkers resolved to immediately join up with community organizations in political action campaigns against the apartheid government. In addition, delegates elected Nelson Mandela as NUM's honorary life president.

TAKE THE LEAD

During the March 22-24 strike, leaders from out between different ethnic groups in the name of killing seven African workers and injuring eight others. Similar ethnic clashes had occurred earlier in 1974 and 1975. The South African government has repeatedly stated that it is preparing contingency plans to expel foreign workers in response to international economic sanctions against South Africa. These

campaign targeting GENCO... The Anglo-American Corporation has admitted as the existence of a foreign-made system installed in the plant were foreign kitchen and administrative buildings of its Western Deep Levels gold mine. The system, designed for use in the event of "war," among African

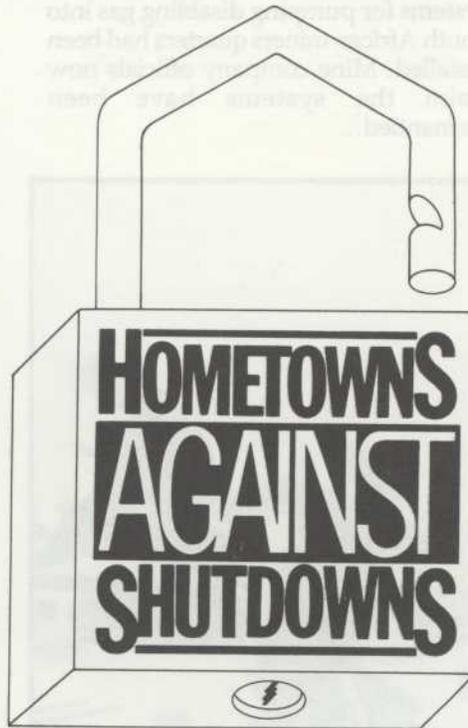
Perhaps only workers of America's... South Africa's mine today. Under apartheid, black miners are listed as "contract" workers paid one-third the wages of white miners. In 1974, 1975, and 1976, the mine was the scene of

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AFRICA FOR USA (continued)

publicize an Economic Bill of Rights to combat corporate abandonment of workers and communities, and will spread the story of how 3M workers built a new kind of solidarity.

Africa for USA is also the theme of recent support by the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (SFAWU) for the striking meatpackers of Local P-9 at the Hormel plant in Austin, Minnesota. The Hormel Company has done business for the past several years with Renown Food Products in South Africa, profiting from licensing agreements which give Renown use of Hormel's sophisticated meat processing technology at its Deep City plant near Johannesburg. Renown Food is one of South Africa's top three meatpacking



firms and is a subsidiary of a leading South African conglomerate, Barlow Rand.

According to SFAWU general secretary David Makahma, Renown Food is notorious as an anti-union company, which has severely harassed union members and has instigated the arrest of several activists. Makahma added, "The South African meatpacking industry is highly brutish, even by South African standards."

SFAWU workers have good reason to understand Local P-9's consumer boycott against Hormel, since Renown Food Products is one of seventeen companies targeted in a national boycott campaign by SFAWU's parent federation COSATU. SFAWU has sent a contribution to Local P-9 in Austin to support the Hormel strike, which is now in its ninth month.

Africa for USA—USA for Africa. You bet!

**NY Labor Committee
Against Apartheid**
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225 Broadway, NYC 10007

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