



# T&G NEWS

Newspaper of the Transport & General Workers' Union



Number 5

July 1990

# Biggest strike in T&G history



*Cleaners gather at Curries Fountain during their 5 day strike*

Cleaners in T&G Natal are angry and want to see change now! So cleaners from 11 different companies came together and decided to make demands to the bosses. On 25 May about 3000 cleaners came out on strike, but by the middle of the strike about 7000 cleaners were on strike. Most of the strikers were women.

The most important demand was for a living wage. In the Durban area the wage determination gives cleaners R379 a month. But many bosses pay less than R379 and these bosses know it is against the law.

On top of the low wage the bosses make cleaners buy their own uniforms, but the wage

determination says the bosses must buy these uniforms.

All of the strikers come from contract cleaning companies like Sneller, Supercare, Pritchards, Regent, Mrs Mop, Clean-It, Keep Clean, North Coast Cleaners, Floline, and Durban Property Services. These companies send cleaners out to clean in other companies and get money in return. But cleaners see little of the money their bosses make from their hard work.

Cleaners made many other demands in the strike as well. Some of these demands were for recognition of T&G, 6 months paid maternity leave, 15 days compassionate leave, washing rooms, 40 hour week, more staff,

and more attention to health and safety problems.

Strikers did not want to talk to the bosses from each company. Cleaners wanted to talk to the bosses association. Cleaning bosses in Natal come together under the Natal Contract Cleaners Association.

While talks with the bosses went on, cleaners met at Currie's Fountain Stadium. Twice the police came and forced workers to leave the stadium.

The bosses got a big fright and after 5 days they agreed to deal with the cleaners' demands. So cleaners went back to work. Talks with the bosses are still going on.

## 12000 cleaners and guards march

At TGWU Congress in 1989 we decided to start a campaign for better conditions in the cleaning and security sectors. Our campaign went off with a bang with nationwide marches on June 1.

Workers in most branches marched to present the Minister of Manpower, and the Minister of Law and Order with a petition of our demands.

In the Vaal workers did not get permission to march so 500 workers met in the COSATU buildings, and 5 delegates took the demands to the police and manpower.

Altogether about 15,300 cleaning and security workers marched. In Cape Town 40 Coin Security guards were dismissed but after union action the company agreed to reinstate workers.

11 workers at Quadcon Cleaners were dismissed and we are busy fighting this. Also 5 workers from Fidelity Guards and Knightwatch were arrested and let out on R500 bail. Charges are still not known.

### Demands to the Minister of Manpower

Security guards and cleaners demanded that the minister change the wage determination to improve the conditions of workers. What were these demands?

Workers demanded a R1000 monthly minimum wage. At the moment, for example, guards earn R413 and cleaners R379 a month. In the last determination guards got a very small increase of R30 a month.

Guards also demanded an end to

•continued on page 2

**Inside: Cleaners' demands •Natal violence •IBL struggle**

# 12 000 cleaners and guards march

• continued from page 1

the 12 hour shift. Guards want a 40 hour week. There was also a demand that bosses use less part-time and casual workers because these workers have very few rights.

Many bosses do not give the workers' their rights that fall under the wage determination. This is against the law.

For example, many bosses make workers pay for their uniforms, and do not pay the proper rates for overtime and Sunday work.

Workers demanded that this must stop. It is also common that guards are beaten and assaulted by the bosses. Guards want this to stop at once.

Other demands were for 6 months paid maternity leave, full payment for public holidays like June 16 and March 21, and a month's annual leave.

The petition also asked for the bosses to start talking with the union about setting up national industrial councils in the cleaning and security industries.



*Cleaners and guards march in the streets of Johannesburg to demand national industrial councils and an end to the Security Officers Act*

This is very important because the union cannot negotiate with every little company in the industry. We must have one set of negotiations every year that covers all security guards and cleaners.

#### **Demands to the Minister of Law and Order**

The marchers also wanted changes from the Minister of Law and Order. Their main demand was for the minister to get rid of

the Security Officers Act (SOA).

#### **Why is the Security Officers Act so bad?**

The Act says that all security guards must register. The first time the guard must pay R70 to register. Then after this the guard must pay R35 to keep up registration every year. T&G guards will not pay this money.

To register all guards must give their fingerprints, and no guard

with a past criminal record can work in the security industry.

T&G guards will not register. In T&G we do not believe that security guards are another police force. We told the minister that the best way to deal with the security industry is for workers and bosses to negotiate work conditions in a national industrial council. We will not be controlled by the Minister of Law and Order.

**BRIEFS • BRIEFS • BRIEFS**

## IBL struggle goes on

In October last year workers at Interstate Bus Lines in Bloemfontein went on strike over bad discipline in the company. The company then dismissed 490 workers.

There has been a long, hard struggle for dismissed workers since October. The bosses employed 320 scab bus drivers. In January a forum of union, youth, and community people decided on a bus boycott to get the dismissed workers back to work.

The union met the bosses at a conciliation board hearing. The bosses then made the scabs into permanent workers. After long, hard negotiations the bosses agreed to take back 120 dismissed workers - a few workers every two weeks. So far about 80 workers are back at work.

The company now says there are too many workers and they need to retrench. The union negotiated that the bosses cannot retrench T&G workers

now back at work.

But there are still many dismissed workers who are not back at work. These workers and their families have nothing to live on. The T&G workers back at work all give the dismissed workers R15 a week to live on. But this is too little money to live on.

Members of T&G from all over the country, these dismissed workers need your help. Talk about raising money for the IBL workers in all your union meetings. Work out different ways to raise money then ask your branch to send the money to the IBL workers. Start now!

These workers and their families have been starving for many months!

## Transiton workers locked out

In April, 70 workers from Transiton came to work and the bosses told them to sign a new contract. Workers were very surprised because the bosses never spoke to workers about all the changes. The new contract



*Transiton shop stewards waiting for the court decision*

spoke about changes in overtime, a probation period for new workers, and new disciplinary, grievance and retrenchment procedures. The contract also stopped workers from taking part in any industrial action.

Workers refused to sign the contract. So the bosses locked out the workers and dismissed them all. T&G are now taking court action to get workers back to work while the bosses and the union continue to talk.

Transiton is a new T&G company in the Boksburg area. It is clear the bosses do not want

the union around. And we know why! Workers earn low wages and live in very bad conditions in the company hostel.

The hostel rooms have no electricity and no beds. The hostel has no stoves, no washing rooms, no window panes and no toilets. There are no dustbins and workers throw rubbish into the bush. There are no phones, and no shops or bus-stops nearby. Workers cook, eat, and sleep in a cold room with stone floors and a tin roof.

We are going to fight this company all the way!

# Focus on Natal violence

## Attacks on T&G members

Many workers in T&G do not live in Natal. It is hard for people outside Natal to know how bad it is to live with the terrible violence in Natal. Many people have died, and thousands of people are without homes. This is not violence that lasts one day or one month. This is violence that goes on all the time. People in Natal are never free of fear and attacks.

T&G workers and organisers in Natal have also come under attack. Bus drivers at Kwa Zulu Transport (KZT) in Pietermaritzburg are often under attack from Inkatha forces. At least 5 T&G drivers have died in attacks.

The violence has also spread to northern Natal. T&G northern Natal branch secretary, Bheki Mthembu, was taken from his house by Inkatha people but luckily escaped. In May the house of a shop steward from Empangeni Transport was fire bombed at night. Comrade Mkhize's two children were badly burnt.

In April Comrade Dladla, a shop steward from Cargo Carriers, went away for the Easter weekend. After the weekend he came back to his house near Amanzimtoti. Dladla's house was burnt with his furniture inside.

## Natal organiser and JWC

In T&G we have worried about the Natal violence for a long time. So we decided to find money to employ an organiser to work on the Natal problem. The ITF (International Transport Federation) raised the money for this T&G organiser. Our organiser, Comrade Ian Blose, works with the Natal Joint Working Committee (JWC).

What is the JWC? The JWC is a

broad committee of COSATU, UDF, community organisations, service organisations and churches. JWC was set up last year to help with the Natal problem. The JWC has different committees. There is a Welfare Committee that helps refugees fleeing from attacks and burnt homes. The Welfare Committee also campaigns for PEACE in the hard hit areas.

There is a Propaganda Committee that gives out information to press and other people in South Africa and overseas. And there is an Organising Committee to run campaigns for peace in Natal. The Finance Committee deals with money for JWC's work.

The JWC works with Peace Committees in townships and other areas. At the moment the JWC needs COSATU workers to set up Peace Committees with the community in more far out areas like Port Shepstone, and Empangeni.

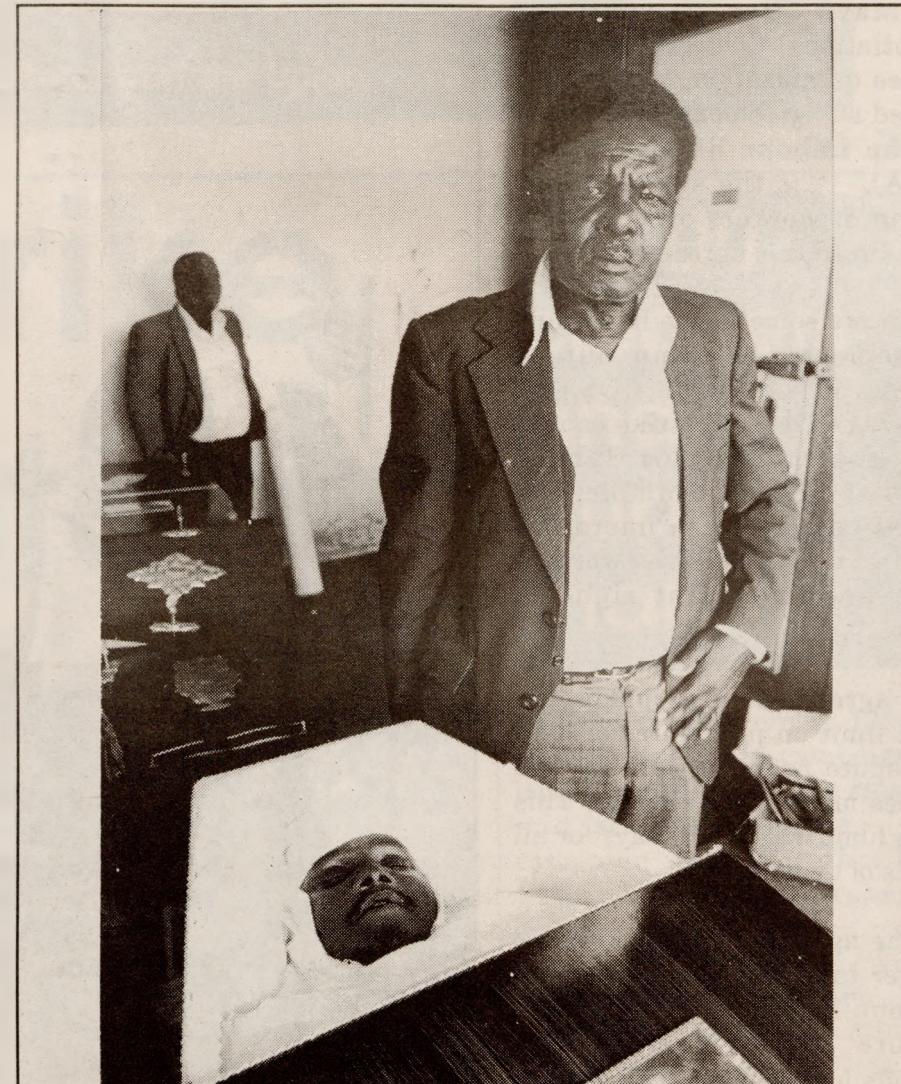
Comrade Blose will work with the JWC but will also keep close contact with T&G's three Natal branches. He will attend BECs and give information to the branches about the work he is doing.

## COSATU policy on Natal violence

The violence in Natal is getting worse every day. The violence is spreading to smaller places outside the big cities and to rural areas.

Many people say "Oh it is the COSATU/UDF faction and the Inkatha faction at war again!" This is not true. People in Natal will tell you clearly where the problem lies. The attacks come directly from certain Inkatha people, and the police and army are helping these people.

You can see Inkatha people on the attack like an army, and



One of the T&G members who died in the Natal violence

behind them you can see SAP trucks. The SAP and SADF also give Inkatha people guns for attacks. Sometimes you see the police go to houses and take all guns, knives and other weapons in the area. Then later in the day you see Inkatha attacking these same unarmed people.

COSATU Central Executive took a strong resolution in May this year around the Natal violence. This resolution states that Inkatha warlords and the KwaZulu police are waging a war against our people. The SAP and the SADF are also helping the warlords and vigilantes.

The resolution also states that COSATU and UDF have worked very hard at peace talks with Inkatha. But it is clear that Buthelezi is not interested in peace and only wants to attack COSATU with words of violence.

COSATU believes in fighting for peace, and also believes that our members have the right to defend themselves against violence. So we demand that the Inkatha warlords be arrested and put on trial for their many acts of violence. COSATU is looking into laying charges against the leaders of Inkatha.

COSATU also believes that there must be an independent enquiry into the actions of the police in the area. The KwaZulu Police must go, together with the end of the Bantustan system.

## What can TGWU members do?

In the first week of July COSATU and its allies will hold NATIONAL MASS ACTION in support of all people wanting peace in Natal.

In T&G all locals and BECs must talk about how to defend our comrades in Natal. We must decide what action to take in the week of July to further the resolution taken by COSATU CEC. T&G comrades must work with SAYCO, UDF, and ANC structures in their areas to plan action. Talk about using the slogan "Defend Natal disarm the warlords/ Disband the KZP".

July 2 will be a big day of action. Workers must decide what action to take on that day. And on July 7 there will be marches held in all the big centres of South Africa. These marches will go to local police stations and demands handed over. We must also put pressure on bosses and employer associations to take a stand on the Natal violence.

On July 28-29 there will be a national Peace Conference. Many organisations who want peace in Natal will attend. The conference will talk about a national campaign for peace in Natal, and defence of people who want peace.

**There can be no peace in South Africa until there is peace in Natal!**



A house burns during the ongoing strife in Natal

# Fight for new LRA goes on

In May, after 2 years of negotiations, COSATU and the bosses organisation, SACCOLA, signed an agreement for changes in the Labour Relations Act (LRA). It is the strength and action of workers over 2 years that forced this agreement.

These are some of the important agreements to come out of negotiations between COSATU and SACCOLA. A strike cannot be called an unfair labour practise. So for example, the bosses cannot stop, or interdict a legal strike. This gives workers the very important right to strike.

The agreement also makes the time limit on procedures around a dispute between workers and bosses much more simple. This time limit will be 180 days for all kinds of disputes.

In the agreement bosses can no longer take legal action against unions for an illegal strike. Before the agreement, the unions had to show they did not call for an illegal strike. The bosses could take unions to court and ask for a lot of money for loss of production during the strike. Now workers are fighting for the government to make this agreement into law. It must become law now, in this parliamentary sitting.

So at the end of May COSATU called for a Week of Action to demand the LRA agreement become law. T&G workers all over the country went on marches and demonstrations to make the demand. In Transvaal many goods transport companies went on demonstrations.

For example, there were joint demonstrations at Jan Smuts Airport from companies like Renfreight, Safcon, Grinrod, Micor, and Sun Couriers. In the Vaal about 400 T&G workers



*Sun Couriers workers marching in the streets of Edenvale. Other workers from Makro, Coke and Gallo also joined T&G workers.*

marched, many of the workers were cleaners. In Port Elizabeth there were demonstrations in cleaning, security and all goods transport companies. The workers at the University of Port Elizabeth came out on a number of very strong demonstrations in front of the UPE administration buildings.

There was also a big march and demonstration at UCT. In Cape Town IHS and SACD workers joined hands with SARHWU dock workers for a big demonstration down at the docks.

COSATU and NACTU met with the Minister of Manpower on 14 June. He told us that he will not make the agreement with

SACCOLA into law this year. We are very angry about the Minister decision. We think the government is not serious about political negotiations if they spit in the face of workers.

We will not stop protest action until this agreement is law. And we, in COSATU, will go on with worker action around the LRA until the Act gives proper protection to all workers!

## More problems with Putco

At the Homelands depot of Putco there are about 900 workers. About 400 are T&G members and 500 TAWU (Transport & Allied Workers Union) members. But from 1986 to 1989 ZATAWU (ZATAWU has now merged with T&G) had the majority of members at the Homelands depot. The Putco bosses wanted to break this majority so they put more TAWU members into the Homelands depot.

At the beginning of June wage negotiations started with Putco. Both T&G and TAWU negotiate together with Putco. But the TAWU people did not want the Homelands depot shop stewards at the negotiations because T&G are the minority union there. The bosses agreed with TAWU that T&G shop stewards must go.

T&G workers were angry because workers know that T&G is the minority union at the Homelands depot because Putco wanted to break our majority there. Workers wanted to say to Putco "we are sick of your tricks". Workers also

wanted to demand that Putco open their Wynberg and Springs depots again and take back all T&G members.

So T&G Putco workers decided on action. First the Boksburg workers drove buses to the wrong depot. This meant they wasted Putco's petrol. Then 48 workers at Putco Lea Glenn came out on strike. The next day 400 drivers at Dennilton, 150 drivers from the Homelands depot, and 200 workers at the Mamelodi depot went on strike.

The same day the bosses met with workers. The bosses agreed to take TAWU workers to the Soshanguve depot and leave T&G members at the homelands depot in Pretoria. This means T&G is now in the majority at Homelands and T&G shop stewards can attend wage negotiations. Workers then went back to work.

Workers are planning more action. Worker action will not stop until the Springs and Wynberg depots open again with all our workers back in place!

## T&G national campaign committee

At the last T&G NEC a clear National Campaign structure was set up. This NCC will discuss COSATU and T&G campaigns in an ongoing way. COSATU also have a National Campaign Committee and the T&G NCC will feed ideas and information into the COSATU NCC.

The T&G NCC will have one worker delegate from each branch, the branch secretary from each branch, and all national office bearers will attend. The NCC will plan around COSATU campaigns like the Living Wage Campaign, the Labour Relations Act Campaign, the Anti- Privatisation Campaign, and the Campaign around Natal Violence.

The NCC will also talk about a number of T&G Campaigns like the campaign to make all T&G structures alive and working, the campaign to focus on the Cleaning & Security Sectors in T&G, and the campaign to give support to, and set free, T&G prisoners.