



# T&G NEWS

Newspaper of the Transport & General Workers' Union



Number 4

April 1990

## How Fidelity Guards live!

UNTIL last month Fidelity Guards (FG) was owned by a very big transport company, the Rennies Group. FG workers live in an old mine hostel. This is how this rich company housed its workers.

T&G NEWS went to the West Rand Fidelity Guards Hostel. 325 men workers live in this hostel. These workers come from many places like Transkei, Pietersburg, Qwa Qwa and Gazankulu. Their families cannot live with them in the hostel because there is no place for families to stay. And women and children cannot come inside the hostel.

The hostel was built early in the 1900s. It is dirty, old, broken down, smells bad, and everywhere flies buzz around. The hostel is far from shops and transport is difficult. There are no phones to speak to families and at Christmas often the FG office does not deliver telegrammes.

In each room 16 workers live and sleep. Both day and night shift workers are in one room. This means there is always noise. For example, if a worker is off-duty he brings friends into the room to drink and talk. This wakes up other sleeping workers.

The rooms have a tin roof so it is very hot in summer and very cold in winter. There are holes in the roof and the windows are broken so rain and wind comes into the room. There are no curtains so workers use newspaper and magazines to keep out the light and rain. The floor is cold concrete.

Workers sleep in metal bunks. The company do not give blankets. Next to the bunk is a small cupboard that two workers share. The locks on the cupboard are old and



*No privacy - Fidelity Hostel showers*



*Workers sleep on metal bunkers - sixteen in a room*

broken and theft of workers' things is a big problem. Sometimes the electricity in the rooms goes out for up to 4 months.

The rooms are dark and dirty, and rusty and everything needs a coat of paint. And the rest of the hostel is the same. Toilets, and washing places are far from the men's rooms. At night it is a long way to walk to the toilet. The

toilets are often blocked, water drips down the walls, and mosquitoes and flies buzz around. Nothing is private - on the toilet, in the shower, or in your room.

Workers eat in a room with steel tables. Each worker has a small locker for food. There is no fridge. Flies from the nearby toilet buzz around the kitchen and eating room.

The bosses want workers to



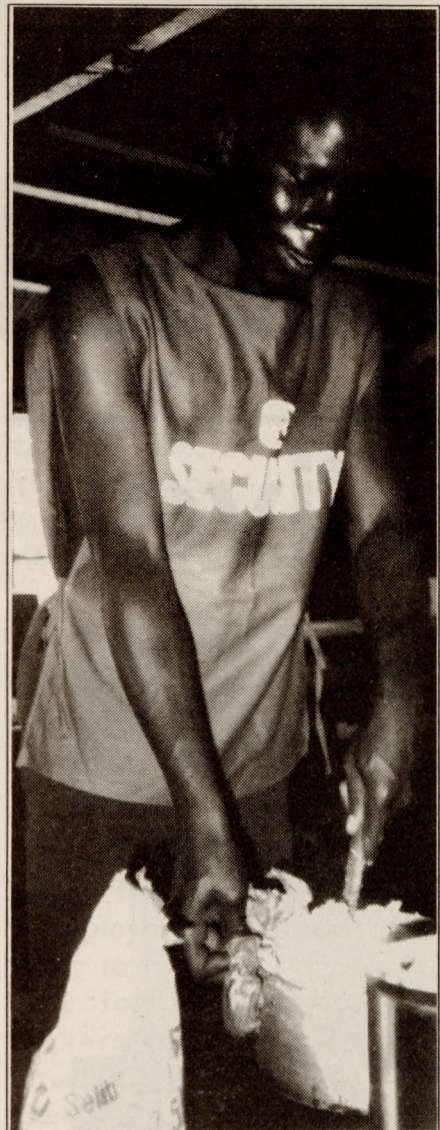
*Fidelity worker washing clothes at cold tap*

look clean and smart in their uniforms, but workers must wash their clothes at cold taps outside. Workers must also buy irons to iron these uniforms.

Workers met in an old hall to tell T&G NEWS about their problems. We climbed up wooden steps to the hall. At

**Continued on Page 2**

## From page 1



*Stoves give out intense heat in the kitchen*

one place there was a very big hole where the step was broken. This means old people cannot climb up and come to meetings.

Workers elected a Health and Safety Committee in the hostel. This Committee meets the bosses once a month. The Committee is trying to get rid of the dirt and flies and get better hostel conditions. The Committee has set up a games room and has demanded equipment from the bosses. There is now a TV and video in the hall, and a pinball machine and a punch bag for boxing.

FG workers want very big changes to the place they live in. Workers know that the mine bosses no longer put their workers in this kind of hostel. Workers want to live with their families, and have space and privacy. An FG worker said "This hostel is old and dead. There is no dignity here. You feel like an animal. There is no enjoyment. You are just depressed and you want to run away."

Now some bosses from FG have bought this company from Rennies. Will these new bosses give workers better living conditions? We wait to see.

## Briefs

## R.E.D Workers win!

IN February 350 workers at Rennies Express Delivery went on a wage strike for a week. The company offered R24 a week increase for all workers and workers demanded R35. Workers also demanded 3 weeks bonus pay. The company agreed to let workers picket outside company gates every day.

At the end of the strike workers won R31 increase in wages, and workers will get 4 weeks bonus pay by 1991. The company agreed to backpay workers from January this year. We salute these workers for their discipline and their victory.

## T&G employs AIDS officer

AN important resolution on AIDS was put forward to T&G Congress last December. The resolution noted that truck drivers go long distances away from their wives and so have sex with other women. This means truckers can get the



*R. E. D. workers picket during the strike*

killer AIDS. Truckers can also pass on AIDS to their wives.

The AIDS resolution says T&G must run an AIDS education programme. There are also bosses from trucking companies who are starting AIDS education for workers. The union has started to work with Cargo Carriers on AIDS education.

At the last T&G NEC workers decided to employ a T&G AIDS education person for a year. The union asked WIG (Workplace Information Group) to find a good person for this job. WIG has worked with AIDS education for some time now.

## Organiser shot

On 25 March Comrade Tex Rantsatsi, an organiser in the Western Transvaal branch, was shot and badly injured by police in the Vaal. Tex was leading a march of thousands of Vaal residents to demand that township rents be set at R30 a month. Police blocked the road so marchers decided to turn back. Police then opened fire. Fifteen people were killed and more than a hundred injured. Tex was hit in the lungs and was in the intensive care unit at Sebokeng Hospital for a week. We are happy to say that Tex is getting better by the day. Get well soon, comrade Tex, we all want to see you among us again.

# Dock workers on Strike

**DOCK** workers, or stevedores, face very big problems. In the middle of the 1970s the bosses started to retrench stevedores in a big way. For example, before 1978 there were about 2,500 dockers in Cape Town harbour. After 1978 there were only 450 dockworkers.

At this time the bosses started to use big "containers". This means that many goods for loading and off loading from ships come in one big container. Containers cut down the loading of each little box or bag onto the ship. So thousands of dockers lost their jobs.

The other problem dockers face is that the bosses want lots of workers when a ship comes into port. When there are no ships the bosses do not want workers. So the bosses use a lot of "casual" workers.

Casual workers have very few rights.

The T&G branch in the Western Cape has won some very important rights for casual dockworkers. Before the union started to organise dockworkers the bosses employed only casual workers.

The bosses paid casuals when there was work and nothing when there were no ships. The union forced South African Stevedores to employ permanent workers with a guaranteed wage. But the bosses still use many casual workers. And when a worker retires or dies the bosses do not want to get a new permanent worker.

The union in the Cape has fought hard for these casuals. For example, casuals earn the same daily rate of R37.70 as the

permanent dockworkers. The union also won rights for 67 casual workers. These workers are "registered casuals" so the bosses use the 67 casuals before they use other casual workers.

In February this year dockers in South African Stevedores (SAS) went on strike. SAS is the biggest shipping company in South Africa. Both permanent and casual workers came out on strike. One of the demands in the strike was from the casual workers.

Many casual dockers come from far away to do a day's work. So casual workers are demanding guaranteed pay for one day's work a week. The company offered to pay weekly transport costs but casuals need more than this. So it is certain there will be more militant demands from casual dockworkers in the future.

# The crisis of unemployment

WE all know that many people in South Africa have no work. Some people say there are at least 5 million people without work. In T&G we are the lucky ones because we have work but what about people without jobs? Why are there so many unemployed people? And is there anything that we as union people can do?

## What does the government do about unemployment?

THE government does not provide proper welfare benefits for people without work. In Europe, for example, governments spend 40% of their money on welfare. In South Africa the government spends 8% of its money on welfare.

The one benefit there is for the unemployed is the UIF (Unemployment Insurance Fund). To get UIF you must be employed for 2 years. Then you get 45% of your wage for 6 months. So this money is very little for a very short time. Also many young unemployed people have never worked so they do not get UIF. Only 10% of unemployed people get UIF.

The government has almost no job creation plans for the unemployed. They do not train people properly in new skills so they can go out and get jobs. Sometimes they find work for the unemployed but these are bad jobs with little pay, for example weeding, or working as a kitskonstabel.

The truth is that the government wants unemployment. They want to divide workers from the unemployed. The government's plan is to give more and more benefits to workers. For example, more workers will get better housing, medical benefits, better schooling and so on. People with jobs will be the privileged.

The unemployed must try and make a living from selling on the streets and so on. They must sell cheap goods to workers but they will have no benefits because they



*Cape Unemployed protest against rising food prices*

are "self employed". The unemployed will live in slums around the cities.

So workers will get a better standard of living and they will not care about the unemployed. And the bosses will use the unemployed against workers in a strike. Workers will worry about losing their jobs and benefits, and will not want to strike. So workers and unemployed will be divided. There will be "an employed class" and an "unemployed class" and the working class will be divided.

These are things workers must beware of.

**How can we stop this divide between employed and unemployed? T&G spoke to people from the NUWCC (National Unemployed Co-ordinating Committee) about how they organise the unemployed, and how workers can join hands with the unemployed.**

**TGWU:** When was the committee launched?

**NUWCC:** When COSATU was launched in 1985 it adopted a resolution on unemployment. There were pockets of organisation all round the country and in 1987 these organisations came together. A co-ordinating committee was set up with full time workers in head office.

COSATU adopted another resolution on unemployment



**Dan Mohapi, NUWCC general secretary**

in 1987 saying "COSATU head office will take active steps to launch a national unemployed workers' union" and we felt COSATU was our home.

**TGWU:** How do the unemployed come into your union?

**NUWCC:** We talk to workers at offices where they collect unemployment benefits. We use schools and churches to talk about our organisation and the issues of unemployment. We also recruit retrenched and dismissed workers from unions.

**TGWU:** Does your union run any campaigns?

**NUWCC:** We are working on a campaign around unemployment benefits. We believe that capitalism creates much unemployment and that the bosses find this unemployment very useful. So the bosses and the government must provide for people without work. They

must see that people get food, housing, free health service, and money for other basic needs. This is our "LIVING BENEFITS CAMPAIGN".

We also make the demand of "JOBS FOR ALL". We know this cannot happen overnight. But we must work towards this in a post apartheid South Africa.

**TGWU:** Has your "LIVING BENEFITS CAMPAIGN" taken off?

**NUWCC:** Last year there was a march in Cape Town of about 600 unemployed. The marchers protested against rising food prices and low wages and demanded benefits for the unemployed. The marchers gave a petition signed by 5000 people to the Department of Agriculture.

The Western Cape region will also meet the Minister of Agriculture on prices and food benefits for the unemployed. In the Natal region the unemployed marched to the Department of Manpower. The marchers handed over demands around UIF to the Director General.

In the Wits Region unemployed workers went into hospitals and demanded free medical treatment. On that day the unemployed got free treatment. But now the unemployed must fight for free treatment all of the time.

**TGWU:** How can the Unemployed Union and other

• Continued on Page 4

• **From Page 3**  
unions in COSATU work together?

**NUWCC:** We are working hard to educate the unemployed around the problem of taking jobs of workers on strike. But this is difficult because unions do not tell us about strikes and dismissals. We must know about dismissals and also possible strikes. Then we can help to stop scabbing. Our union must form joint committees with striking workers.

Unions must send dismissed or retrenched workers to help in the unemployed union. We need comrades who know about organisation.

COSATU unions can also help fight for better unemployment benefits. It is better to fight on the factory floor for benefits before workers lose jobs. Unions must work with NUWCC to demand changes in UIF from the bosses and from the Department of Manpower.

**TGWU:** Is it difficult to organise the unemployed?

**NUWCC:** It is very difficult. In a workers' union you can offer many benefits like better wages, job security, and so on. What can you offer the unemployed?

We think of setting up workers' controlled co-ops. But we do not have money for training. Workers in our regional offices get no money. We get a small grant from COSATU every month but we need to raise more funds.

We need more help and support from unions in COSATU. We depend on unions to educate workers about the problem of unemployment.

In 1989 there was a COSATU meeting to look at the problems of our unemployed union. But only one union, TGWU, came to this meeting. In fact we need more support from the MDM in general.

We want COSATU unions to take the problem of unemployment very seriously.

Unity between workers and the unemployed can help to build the power of the working class!



*Putco Wynberg workers on strike before their dismissal*

## Trouble with PUTCO

At the end of March Putco told workers at Springs Depot that the depot will close at the end of April. So 200 workers will lose their jobs.

The workers are very angry because they asked Putco many times if they intend closing the depot. Always the bosses said they will not close the depot. Workers are also angry because they will get only one weeks notice pay. Workers are going to

fight this.

This closure is also very bad news for the union. Both our President, Vivian Zungu, and the Transvaal branch chair, Joseph Mbazima, work in Springs depot. Comrades Vivian and Joseph are old members of T&G and Vivian was elected as President for the third time in December last year.

In March 450 workers at Putco Wynberg went on

strike. Workers called for the dismissal of the Divisional Manager, Scott. Scott was very anti union. Scott decided to resign and workers demanded pay for the time on strike. Putco then dismissed all workers.

A few weeks later Putco asked workers to reapply for their jobs. But workers want all workers reinstated not re-employed. Workers will meet the bosses in April to make these demands.

## Give your voice to the Workers' Charter

At COSATU's 3rd Congress workers took a resolution on a WORKERS' CHARTER. This resolution says that COSATU, ANC, SACP, and SACTU have talked long and hard about how workers will take forward the struggle for democracy and socialism.

The ANC put out constitutional guidelines for a future South Africa. In these guidelines the ANC says there must be a place for

workers' rights. SACTU and SACP have put forward different Workers' Charters. These Charters are useful but in the end workers must decide what goes into a Workers' Charter.

COSATU Congress decided to start a Workers' Charter Campaign. This Campaign must get the ideas from all workers - not only the voices of workers in COSATU. COSATU set up a National

Campaign Committee.

This Committee has drawn up a WORKERS' CHARTER QUESTIONNAIRE.

T&G workers must meet and talk about this questionnaire. This is how workers will decide what workers' rights will go into a future S.A. Constitution. This is how workers will protect the working class from future exploitation. This will be one of the most important acts of your life! Make sure you get a copy of the questionnaire, and talk about the questions in your workplace, in your locals, in your BEC and so on.

COSATU will meet in June to see how well the Campaign is going. Then a Special Congress in October this year will take workers ideas and come up with a final Workers' Charter. Time is short comrades, start talking now!

## Forward to independence!

On the historic day, 21st March 1990, the South African flag came down in Namibia. The new Namibian flag flapped bravely above the Independence stadium. Welcome to Independence Namibia! Welcome to the end of colonial rule!

The Namibian Transport & Allied Workers Union (NATAWU) invited T&G to send some delegates to Independence Celebrations. The Information Officer, Kally Forrest, and the Eastern Province, Branch Secretary, Julius Matroos, attended the Independence celebrations. We were proud and happy to be there. And we wish NUNW (National Union of Namibian Workers) and NATAU a strong future in a strong and united Namibia.