



DURBAN STRIKES



In December 1972, the then Nationalist Party government Minister of Labour, Marais Viljoen, said the following:

“We believe there is no place for the Bantu in the existing trade union movement because his needs are adequately catered for in the existing system ...There is no reason for change whatsoever. ...The organisation of African workers is neither in the interests of South Africa, nor in the interests of improving their own wage position, nor in the interests of promoting race relations.”

One month later, workers at Coronation Bricks downed tools – and the 1973 strikes had begun. The modern labour movement in South Africa was born.

Now it 1993. What has been achieved in the factories after twenty years of labour struggle? And what are the new challenges facing workers in the workplace today?

LABOUR BULLETIN team KARL VON HOLDT and WILLIAM MATLALA went to Natal to find out.