



# Negotiations and actions: towards a general strike

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As South Africa heads towards what is planned to be the biggest general strike in its history, COSATU unions are mobilising as the leading force in the campaign of mass action. DOT KEET outlines the process and the perspectives.

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The streets of Johannesburg and cities and towns, mines and factories throughout South Africa have been enlivened by the colourful marches, banners and singing of tens of thousands of demonstrating workers since the middle of May. Union after union has been taking to the streets in support of their annual wage and other demands presented to their employers.

June-July is the normal negotiations period for many trade unions in South Africa, but the processes have been dramatically heightened this year in the context of the call issued by COSATU, in March, for a campaign of worker action in support of the federation's key challenges to business and to

government in the deepening economic, social and political crises in the country.

Thus, a distinctive feature of the current worker actions is not only that they have involved - one after another - virtually every one of the COSATU affiliates, but that they have been linking the burning industrial issues in their different sectors with broader economic problems and proposals *and* with the key political demands in South Africa today.

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## Negotiations

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The negotiation packages being presented to employers reflect the situations in the respective sectors, but there are significant common

threads running through almost all the sets of negotiating demands. It is also evident that, with few exceptions, employers are showing similar patterns of resistance to trade union demands and proposals:

### Wages

There are one or two sectors where relative advances have been achieved - such as the 20% increase that TGWU has got for most security guards, and the 16% and 19% wage increases that SACCAWU has gained in specific company agreements. More commonly, wage offers have been well below the 16% inflation rate. Thus the 10% and 11% increases gained by POTWA from the Post

Office, or the wage increases offered to skilled workers in NUMSA - Tyre (12%), Metal (8%), Auto (6%) and Motor (4,9% and 2%) – actually amount to wage reductions. SACTWU makes this point forcefully about the 8-10% wage increase packages it is being offered.

It is even worse in other sectors, such as construction, where CAWU is being offered an insulting 5%, or on the mines where 5% is condemned by the NUM as “the worst wage offer to goldminers by the Chamber of Mines since 1918.” A straight wage freeze is being proposed to SAMWU members by Johannesburg City Council. Checkers started its negotiations with SACCAWU by trying to impose a 10% wage cut!

### **Jobs**

The most serious threat facing workers – and their unions – are retrenchments. NUM reports job losses on the goldmines running at 3 000 a month. SACTWU points to the loss of 20 000 jobs in textiles and clothing for its members alone. SAMWU is facing massive job cuts with the ‘rationalisation’ of local government. The JCC, for example, is proposing to halve its 15 000 workforce. PPWAWU reports that, in the forestry sector, Sappi on its own has caused 2 000 PPWAWU members to lose their jobs – mainly through sub-contracting – and a much greater number of non-union

members have also been axed. Sub-contracting is a particular danger to SACCAWU as well – with jobs also being threatened by the casualisation, job flexibility and multi-skilling being promoted by management.

### **Moratorium on retrenchments**

A stop to retrenchments has become a central demand in all COSATU unions. It is still a central issue even for NUMSA, although it achieved moratoriums in the auto and tyre sectors last year. As NUMSA points out, without such an agreement – as in its metal and engineering sector – 35 000 jobs were lost in 1991 and already 13 000 this year. NUMSA is, itself, now battling to defend the existing moratoriums as the employers make it the central blocking issue in the current negotiations.

Many unions are approaching the problem of retrenchment by also proposing (re)training programmes – as in POTWA and SACCAWU. An innovative package of proposals has been put forward by SACTWU, including the building up of “short time funds”, through both employer and union contributions, to enable people to be kept on as long as possible.

### **Centralised bargaining**

All of the COSATU unions are determined to move towards, or to improve upon, centralised bargaining. Effective industrial councils

have been made a central issue by the unions. Some, such as NUMSA, already have achieved this in all their sectors. It is much more uneven in other industries. SACTWU is seeking to strengthen and “extend the geographical scope” of its industrial councils. Despite the feuding between the respective employers’ organisations in the Cape and Natal, and in-house industrial councils in many of the large city councils, SAMWU is determined to fight for one national industrial council for all local authorities. TGWU has made progress in setting up some provincial industrial councils – as in contract cleaning and goods transport – and is now demanding, in the face of employer resistance, that these be extended into national councils. Other unions, such as CAWU, SACCAWU, PPWAWU and especially CWIU are at an earlier phase in developing their own sectoral structures, preparatory to furthering their struggles for centralised bargaining – against strong resistance from employers.

### **Unilateral restructuring**

Union after union is faced with damaging unilateral restructuring by employers – whether it is by government, as faced by SAMWU in the municipalities, or POTWA in the Post Office; or by private enterprise conglomerates such as Sappi, imposing destructive restructuring on



PPWAWU; or at many other levels and sectors of industry in South Africa. With the thousands of large and small employers in textiles/clothing and commerce/catering, SACTWU and SACCAWU are facing particularly acute problems and they have produced urgent proposals for national forums for their respective sectors.

A recurrent theme running through the unions' positions is an acute awareness of the crisis situations in their respective sectors. Many have drawn up proposals to their respective employers' organisations to meet with the unions in appropriate forums to seriously discuss the problems and move towards fundamental solutions.

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### **Responses and reactions**

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**T**he responses of management to the trade unions' proposals are important to understanding why workers are being pushed towards action in the workplace and onto the streets.

#### **Employers' responses**

The unions are convinced that the employers' responses reflect an element of co-ordination by employer organisations across all sectors to present a united resistance to worker demands and proposals.

Of all the unions, NUMSA probably has the best resources and most developed programmes for dealing with broad problems in its four

sectors.

It has produced various proposals to the employers' federations, including an "Industry Structuring and Growth Commission" in Metal and a "Job Security and Productivity Committee" in Auto. Even with auto companies, supposedly committed to 'participatory management', not much progress has been made; while the tyre manufacturers' organisation has been luke warm, and SAMEIA in the Motor sector has bluntly rejected such structured forums.

NUM, too, has presented a broad programme of measures to the Chamber of Mines to deal with the fundamental crisis in gold mining in South Africa. Hailed as the start of "co-determination" at last year's Mining Summit, the process is being kept (barely) alive only through NUM's determined efforts, as the Chamber of Mines continues to resist global mining restructuring discussions.

Various of the other unions also have industrial restructuring proposals – of different degrees of development – to put to the employers in their sectors. Some of the more successful have been the initiatives by SACTWU, which has given a lead to the textile industry. SAMWU is developing its own ideas about the restructuring of local government to democratise and clean it up, and to streamline it - without their

members paying all the costs.

At one level the unions are trying to draw big business to see reason, and to understand their own interest in securing democracy and peace in South Africa. However, in their day to day management practice that workers experience – rather than their high level political interventions – major 'high profile' employers in South Africa seem to be singularly insensitive to the impact of their own power and privilege on employees struggling to survive in the South Africa of today.

#### **Worker reactions**

NUM members are outraged at the 5% wage offer to them, while mining directors earn more in one month (R30 000) than miners do in three to four years of sweated labour! NUM declares that national negotiations are now in jeopardy after it produced creative profit-sharing proposals – so that workers and employers 'share the losses of the bad times as well as the gains of the good' – only to have them rejected by employers.

Similarly, NUMSA members are angry that, while they make sacrifices going onto short-time with wage cuts, their bosses happily continue on full pay, even though they too are effectively working short-time. A NUMSA leaflet to its members declares that "we have had enough of seeing the bosses live a life of



luxury whilst we are starving,” and roundly accuses capital of having “driven our country into the mess that we find ourselves in every day.”

A SACCAWU leaflet, similarly, declares that the bosses “want us to pay for their mismanagement”; and SACTWU accuses the employers of wanting to “shift the burden of recession onto the workers.”

## Actions

**A**s the recession bites deeper, and employers remain intransigent in the face of the deteriorating conditions of millions of workers; as violence continues to terrorise their lives and the evidence of government complicity grows; workers have been taking a mass of initiatives on the ground.

### Local worker initiatives

All the unions report – although the media largely does not – that the last two months have been characterised by hundreds of local actions by workers all over the country. These have included:

**lunch-time pickets and demonstrations** – such as those by NUMSA workers in the hundreds of workplaces in the Motor sector; and CWIU workers at SASOL, BTR, Harvest Chemicals and Protea Industrial Chemicals and others;

**work stoppages** – such as those reported by

SACCAWU, SACTWU, FAWU and CAWU in the hundreds of large and small workplaces that characterise all these sectors - with some employers reported to have responded with lockouts; **workplace sit-ins** – such as that by SAMWU members at PE’s Ibhayi Council early in May, FAWU workers at Simba in Kempton Park in June, and the 200 NUMSA workers who occupied Nuts and Bolts Company headquarters on 24 June; **wild cat strikes** – particularly the prolonged actions – which did get into the media! – by NUMSA workers at Toyota, from 8 May, which is still simmering; and the NEHAWU workers strike at the hospitals since 8 June; **marches on company head offices** – such as the NUM miners march on Goldfields head office on 23 May, and by hundreds of NUMSA shopstewards on SEIFSA head office in June.

### Co-ordinated union actions

Many such small local actions arise from the broader membership mobilisation undertaken by the unions since the call to action from the COSATU Economic Policy Conference at the end of March.

Most of the unions have drawn up programmes of shopsteward preparation and branch discussions on the key issues. CWIU, in particular, seems to be carrying through a very thorough process

leading up to meetings throughout the union, on 4 July.

Already, a series of “rolling” actions, co-ordinated by the unions, have been carried out. Some of these are:

**9-13 May** – POTWA sit-ins and marches in various parts the country;

**10 & 13 June** – SAMWU demonstrations in the large cities and even remote towns;

**9 & 18 June** – SACCAWU lunch-time pickets outside all its organised workplaces;

**18 & 23 June** – SACTWU marches by 60 000 members in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg;

**22 June** – NUMSA’s ‘occupation’ of the streets of central Johannesburg by an estimated 40 000 workers;

**24 June** – SARHWU’s march by 15 000 workers to Transnet head office in Johannesburg;

**29 June** – PPWAWU’s ‘seige’ of Sappi head office in Johannesburg by an estimated 12 000 workers.

### Making the political links

One of the striking aspects of many of these actions was the angry hand-written placards carried by the workers graphically linking their immediate work demands with the broader political crisis in the country.

Amongst the calls for better wages and job security were placards declaring “Down with food price rises!”, “The violence must end!”, “The criminals must be



found!" and "de Klerk must go!" Also "Away with CODESA! The workers will decide!" One of the most powerful was the declaration that "Boipatong will not terrorise us to stop mass action for our rights!"

### **Official disputes**

With the militant mood of the workers, and anticipating that they will soon be moving towards national strike actions, the unions have been following through the due legal processes to ensure maximum protection to their organisations and their members in the campaign of action now unfolding.

As employers have remained intransigent, the unions have, one after another, declared official disputes. Amongst the many disputes under way are: **TGWU** – with the contract cleaner employers since the middle of May; **NUMSA** – with SEIFSA on 14 May; and also with **SAMEIA**, the Motor employers organisation; and since 22 June with employers in the auto sector; **SACTWU** – with employers in three industrial councils from 12 June; **PPWAWU** – with Sappi, the largest employer in its sector, from 18 June; **SACCAWU** – meeting with all employers since the 18 June preparatory to declaring disputes, and officially in dispute with Woolworths since 25 June; **SAMWU** – with the Cape

Province Local Authority Employers Organisation as from 25 June; **CWIU** – with Secunda, Consol Glass and probably with **SASOL** by the end of July.

### **Rolling strikes**

As deadlocks develop, union after union has set target dates in the early weeks of July on which to ballot their members on strike actions. As we go to press (1 July) these include: **NUMSA** in three of its four sectors, **SACTWU**, **SACCAWU**, **CAWU**, **NEHAWU**, **CWIU** in various major industries, and **TGWU** in at least one sector.

With few exceptions, the indications are that the ballots will produce strong support for national strike action. There will be a series of massive national industrial strikes in many different industries during July.

What is not yet clear is whether these will follow their own union timetables or be co-ordinated in what could be a very effective series of "rolling strikes". What is clear, however, is that these strikes will be the curtain raisers on the general strike. The heightening action will undoubtedly dynamise much broader sections of working people into a variety of their own actions around the issues most crucial to them.

### **Drawing in broader forces**

Ever since it declared, in March, that it would take decisive mass action if the

**CODESA** process did not produce an interim government by the end of June and agreement on elections for a constituent assembly by December, **COSATU** has played a crucial role in leading the return of the transformation process in South Africa back into the hands of the masses.

It was **COSATU**'s firm determination – and de Klerk's blatant manipulation of **CODESA** – that eventually turned the tripartite alliance partners, the **ANC** and the **SACP**, towards their present commitment to mass action.

**COSATU** is now playing a central role in drawing even wider forces into action. **NACTU** and other trade unions are obviously important forces. So too are the urban civics, united in the **South African National Civics Organisation**; as well as popular opposition forces in the bantustans, all the churches, consumer groups campaigning against soaring food prices, human rights and lawyers organisations and others.

### **General strike from 3 August**

Above all, it will be **COSATU** paralysing the economy and bringing millions of workers onto the streets in the coming weeks that will mobilise many more millions into unprecedented mass action, and a general strike from 3 August that must be an historic watershed in our country. ♦





Workers sit out the strike at Baragwanath in defiance of a court interdict

Photo: William Matlala

## NEHAWU workers dismissed en masse

Withdrawal of their labour by the general assistants (cleaners, laundry workers, clerical staff and kitchen staff) of the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU) has paralysed nearly all the reef hospitals.

The strike, which began at Baragwanath hospital on 8 June, has affected 59 hospitals across the country. Most of the hospitals for the black community are treating emergency cases only.

The strike involves thousands of mainly general assistants earning starvation wages, working long hours in

bad conditions and kept on 'temporary' work status for long years on end.

According to NEHAWU general secretary, Philip Dexter, the union walked out of the health negotiation forum in Durban on 19 May because:

- The credibility of the government representative, the Commission For Administration (CFA) was in doubt.
- The government was intransigent on the amendment of the LRA for the public sector. It wanted to forbid the right to strike, or to arbitration.
- The CFA offered a 9,2% increase with effect from 1

August, whereas NEHAWU was demanding R724 a month minimum wage and 15,3 % across the board increase, starting from 1 April.

- The union demands permanent status for long term 'temporary' workers.
- The union demands an Interim Dispute Settling Mechanism.

## Workers defy court interdict

The news of the walkout spread like wild fire. Baragwanath workers were at the forefront of the strike. They started by demonstrating during tea breaks. Then the whole



situation was made much worse by a Supreme Court interdict barring workers from hospital premises except when on duty. At a meeting of 1 500 general assistants, workers openly defied the court interdict.

"In 1990 we brought the government to its knees, now we are going to kick it to its death," sang the workers in defiance at Baragwanath.

"We are working for peanuts here. I have been employed for more than 15 years as a temporary worker and I am now due for pension, how am I going to feed my children," cried one worker at the meeting.

### Strike spreads

The mood of defiance grew. The general assistants strike spread and within three days had affected 24 hospitals in the Transvaal. Johannesburg, Hillbrow, Natalspruit, Boksburg, Benoni, Sebokeng, Vereeniging, Sebokeng, H F Verwoed Ga Rankuwa hospitals were amongst those that went on strike.

Two thousand workers marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria where the NEHAWU general secretary presented a memorandum to the minister of administration Org Marais.

This was one of the biggest marches ever held in the heart of Pretoria. The police were taken by surprise when NEHAWU was given permission to hold the march. "When we showed them the magistrate's permission they

were mad with anger," said Dexter.

Within a week, 234 strikers had been arrested for defying the court interdict. Workers at Hillbrow Hospital had to rescued *Labour Bulletin* photographer, William Matlala, from hospital security police.

### Violence and intimidation

Unfortunately the strike was marred by violence and acts of intimidation. Drivers who were delivering milk and bread and at the Klerksdorp Hospital were threatened that their vans would be burnt.

We found a group of nurses at Hillbrow Hospital huddled together in a ward discussing how they were going to leave the hospital. They spoke of intimidation by the strikers and also mentioned that leading members of NEHAWU just burst into the wards looking for workers who were not on strike.

"We do support the strike, but we can't leave patients to die. We all need higher wages and better conditions of employment. We can hardly survive with the salary we get, but we think that patients lives are very important. The strikers know where we are staying and we fear for our lives," they told the Labour Bulletin.

A member of NEHAWU, Vuyo Mazibuko and two nurses' shopstewards - Victoria Mazibuko, and Grisell Marabule were brutally murdered by unknown persons. Some of

the workers were threatened with death if they did not cease their protest actions.

The union has gone all out to quell violence and stop the intimidators but, "workers were doing this because they feared that scabs will take their jobs," Dexter explained.

These are but a few of the incidents reported.

### Weaknesses of the strike

The strike has a number of other weaknesses:

- Despite the fact that it is well supported by the general assistants, the union started very late to organise nurses and radiographers.

- The strike affected black hospitals only and, according to Dexter, that is why the government is not responding positively to the union's demands.

- The union had not prepared itself for the strike. It started as a wild cat strike. Hence, a skeleton staff needed to help in emergency cases was not prepared in advance.

NEHAWU is far behind other unions in terms of organisation. The union only received recognition last year. "We were not ready for the strike, but workers said to us that it is not the case of being ready. We have no alternative but to use our muscle power. The union is now trying to consolidate its forces. We are over stretched and we have very limited resources," said Dexter.

The union is now balloting for a national strike.



**Ethical dilemmas**

Criticism has been levelled at this strike by people in the black community who are the worst affected.

The union understands that in the health sector workers are not dealing with products but human beings. But NEHAWU's view is that workers need to be able to withdraw their labour if necessary. This should be an unconditional right.

Dexter adds, however, that "As a union, we debated the ethical issue and our position is that, if industrial action ever becomes necessary, we must provide skeleton staff. We must maintain emergency services. At the moment it is TPA that is refusing to allow us to provide the skeleton staff."

Dexter says that all services ultimately can be defined as essential, but what the union is talking about is emergency services. This includes: ambulances, casualty wards, doctors, provision of necessary medicines.

According to NEHAWU, the government is the one that pushed them into this position. Had there been an arbitration, workers would not have embarked on a strike at all.

**Challenges to other unions**

There is also a challenge here to COSATU and all unions in South Africa to work out policies and strategies to support health workers so that they do not find themselves

placed in the difficult situation of endangering people's lives while defending their legitimate rights and demands.

**NEHAWU prepares for a major strike**

NEHAWU's CEC is about to review the whole situation. At the moment the union is planning a major showdown with the state.

"We are mobilising all state employees: hospital workers, roads and works, home affairs, agriculture, education, government garages, and all other state departments for national strike. This is the only alternative available to workers, whether members of NEHAWU or not. Strike action is the only way to force Dr Marais into a meeting," concluded Dexter. ♦

*(Snuki Zikalala)*

**News release by Mr P W van Niekerk of the TPA on 30 June 1992**

... the TPA will conclude the dismissal of more or less 7 000 general assistants today. Letters of dismissal have been posted to striking employees since Friday, 26 June 1992. Dismissals are effective from 1 July 1992.

**MWASA strike muffles SABC broadcasts**

On 18 May, journalists, newsreaders, advertising staff, producers, technicians and other members of NACTU's

Media Workers Association of South Africa (MWASA) brought the SABC's black radio stations, as well as CCV-TV2/3 news and sports to a virtual standstill.

Since then, neither rain nor cold weather prevented the 1 000 MWASA members from picketing outside the SABC headquarters in Auckland Park. Lately they have even been joined by some of their white colleagues who are not happy about management's attitude towards the labour dispute and the manner in which the strike has been handled.

SABC headquarters is like an unrest area. Peaceful picketers inside the SABC park are surrounded by dozens of armed police. Black members of staff are asked to state their names and business before being allowed to enter the building.

**Deadlock**

The strike follows a deadlock in negotiations between MWASA and SABC management earlier in the year.

MWASA general secretary, Sithembele Khala says that talks in Durban broke down on 8 May because:

- The SABC rejected MWASA salary demands and slammed the door on further negotiations in the current financial period. The union declared a dispute as it had been agreed earlier that SABC would review the 1991



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salaries.

- The SABC offered 7% across the board, a 4% "merit" increase and a minimum wage of R1 300, whereas MWASA is demanding a 20% increase and a minimum wage of R1 500 a month. MWASA argues that a 7% increase over two years is unreasonable. At the moment the rate of

problem of racial discrimination. Whites in the SABC earn far more than their black counterparts. A Radio Zulu (black) DJ and a Radio Five (white) DJ earn different salaries. A worker in Pietersburg earns R400 and a worker in Johannesburg, in the same job category, earns R1 000.

broadcasts on CCV-TV2/3. Black viewers who are used to listening to the news in their local languages had to strain to understand the American accents. People found the news boring, as CNN concentrated on European news.

"We are paying our licences for nothing. I can hardly understand what the news reader is saying. We need news about our local affairs. They are showing us all the garbage from the West," protested one viewer.

The SABC strike is costing the corporation millions of rands in lost advertising and further losses could be incurred if the strike is not resolved before the Barcelona Olympics. National Treasurer, Tseliso Ralitabo reports that MWASA has requested the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) to begin campaigning to have the SABC barred from covering the Olympics.



MWASA strikers on the march against the SABC

Photo: William Matlala

inflation stands at 16% and last year's was 15%.

- The union also refused to negotiate the 4% merit component because it is "subjective." The people who would evaluate input and output are members or officials of a rival union, the South African Broadcasting Staff Association (SABSA).
- There is also a blatant

### Strike

The union decided to ballot its members for a strike - 90% voted in favour. On 18 May, 1 200 members of MWASA downed their pencils and cameras. The strike blacked out radio and television broadcasts on all the SABC's black stations.

In an effort to counter the strike, SABC used CNN and ITN footage to fill in news

### Solidarity

MWASA has campaigned successfully for international solidarity. The IFJ put pressure on CNN and ITN to stop scabbing on SABC workers by the supply of footage to be used to fill in the news broadcasts.

MWASA's Sethembele Khala also called on the SABC's Radio Metro employees not to undermine the strike by allowing their



material to be used to fill Radio Sesotho programmes. However, Vincent Mfundisi, a member of the strike committee, says that "It is difficult to ask Radio Metro employees to join the strike. SABC has employed them on a contract basis. That is why they are still on the air."

On 26 May, more than 1 000 MWASA members were joined by about 20 political groups who marched from the city centre to SABC's Auckland Park offices. A number of white SABC employees also participated in the demonstration. The march caused a traffic jam in the city centre.

At a rally on the SABC lawns, Sethembele Khala attacked the SABC for being willing to "expose wrongs and injustices of other companies and opposing groups, but refusing to place itself under public scrutiny." He pointed out that the SABC used millions of rands to buy a "yes" vote in the recent referendum, but is now pleading poverty when it has to give its employees a living wage.

Khala also declared that SABC has been used by the Nationalist Party for its interests at CODESA. "We must challenge the SABC to be impartial and to serve the license payers without political strings," he said.

An SABC employee protested that had it been white journalists on strike, or white viewers affected, SABC would have long ago

resolved the strike.

Despite the number of days that SABC workers have spent on the lawn outside the SABC, their morale is very high. They are determined to fight it out to the last, and they say they will go on for "a thousand day strike". ♦  
(*Snuki Zikalala*)

## **SADTU strikes for rights**

The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) carried out strike actions on 21 and 22 May protesting the refusal of the Department of Education and Training (DET) to recognise it as a collective bargaining agent. According to union officials, approximately 30 000 teachers participated in rallies, pickets, marches, and occupations of government offices throughout the country.

Broad national grievances presented by SADTU at the demonstrations included "the government's unilateral restructuring of education" and "failure fundamentally to address the educational crisis."

The unions' grievances on behalf of its members include

- the DET's offer of a "measly" 8,8% rather than the 14% demanded by SADTU;
- the DET's withholding of union dues from members' pay cheques; and
- the victimisation of union leadership.

SADTU regional chairperson of the Western

Transvaal, Oupa Sebolai, and SADTU regional chairperson of the Orange Free State, Samora Lefou, were dismissed prior to the two-day strike actions.

Although none of SADTU's demands has been met, the DET has since improved its wage offer to 9,9% and has agreed to end salary disparities based on gender. This new wage package was welcomed by the Teachers Federal Council (TFC) and the National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA). SADTU, however, labelled this wage offer "an insult to hard working teachers, many of them not even earning a living wage."

In addition to DET's slightly improved wage offer, assistant general secretary Thulas Nxesi also detects "some softening in attitude" on the part of the DET in regard to recognition of SADTU. The DET, however, continues to refuse recognition of SADTU's collective bargaining rights, including the right to strike. While the current Education and Training Act does not allow for strikes by teachers, SADTU "considers teachers to be workers and sees the right to strike as a necessary weapon for all workers," according to Nxesi.

Because SADTU is very concerned with the crisis in township education, "SADTU only uses the strike weapon as a last resort after all other



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channels have been tried," states Nxesi. "We have been attempting to gain recognition from the DET for the past two years."

Nxesi acknowledges that black students are already educationally deprived and are further badly affected by teachers strikes. But he argues that it is impossible for students to receive a good education if teachers are working under terrible conditions. Nxesi also says that "what SADTU is demanding are conditions that will make teacher strikes unnecessary: the recognition of its collective bargaining rights and the institution of

proper grievance procedures."

SADTU will be meeting with the DET until the end of June and is planning further actions if its demands are not met. Although SADTU is not an affiliate of COSATU, it supports the tripartite alliance's call for mass action and considers itself "part and parcel of the current political struggles," according to Nxesi. Because it is so important that students receive a proper education, SADTU will look into ways of participating in mass actions without disrupting the educational process. ♦

*(Jesse Fenichel)*

strikes have taken place over issues such as unfair protection of white employees, calls for the dismissal of white management and differential treatment between the race groups. At the same time, the call for centralised bargaining continues to be a major factor, as evidenced by the prolonged Kentucky dispute.

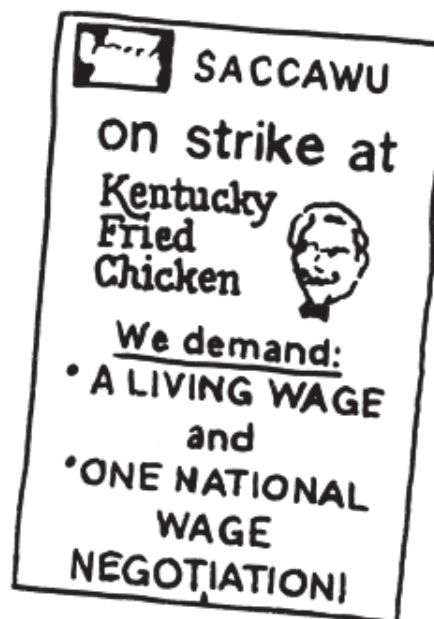
The Automobile Industry was responsible for the greatest number of 'man-days' lost (35,3%), mainly as a result of the prolonged strikes at Toyota in May and June. This was followed by the Retail sector, which accounted for 14,7% of 'man-days' lost largely due to the Kentucky strike; and the state (13,9%) where an upsurge in the number of hospital strikes in the latter part of the period predominated, and a lengthy strike between SABC and MWASA showed little sign of resolution. Intermittent strike action at Impala Platinum Mines contributed towards the figure of 12,9% for the mining sector.

The most active unions in terms of 'man-days' lost to the economy were NUMSA (37%); SACCAWU (14,8%); NUM (13,4%); NEHAWU (10,4%); FAWU (9,2%) and MWASA (6,4%). The unions responsible for the greatest number of strikes were SACCAWU, NEHAWU, NUMSA, FAWU, CWIU and SACWU. ☆  
*(from Andrew Levy & Associates)*

### Strike report – three months ending 30 June 1992

After a fairly slow start to the year, there was a marked increase in strike activity in the second quarter. The loss of 650 000 'man-days' can be compared with a figure of 375 000 during the same period last year and the high of 1 200 000 in 1990. With major wage negotiations in full swing in the metal and mining sectors, it is anticipated that levels will rise considerably in the coming months, in tandem with COSATU's programme of mass action.

It is interesting to note that Grievances are the main trigger factor at (39,8%), followed by wages (32,3%); Recognition/Bargaining



*Strikes - increase in activity  
Photo: Shariff*

Levels (13,9%) and Dismissal/Discipline (10,5%). Wages traditionally dominate the trigger scene but during a period marked by a high degree of confrontation and political tension, a number of