

## Hell for leather

MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD trade unions are involved in an initiative to form a new union federation.

The main force behind the initiative is Freddie Swartz, general secretary of the 5 500-strong Transvaal Leather and Allied Trades Industrial Union. He has written to approximately 176 unaffiliated unions inviting them to attend a meeting in Johannesburg on 21 November to establish whether there is sufficient common ground among them to warrant the establishment of a new umbrella body.

In the letter, Swartz states that unionists from the unaffiliated unions have often expressed the need to get together in a federation, and points out that they have more members than the combined membership of the Congress of SA Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the National Council of Trade Unions (Nactu). The principles on which such a new federation would be based, he adds, could include non-racialism, non-violence, non-involvement in party politics and opposition to sanctions and disinvestment.

Swartz also points out that unaffiliated unions frequently find themselves in conflict with Cosatu unions in the course of their work and that if they want their views to be heard they have to unite.

'There are many disadvantages in not being in a federation', Swartz told WIP in response to queries about the initiative. 'Other groupings claim they speak on behalf on labour. But in terms of numbers and policy

they do not really represent the whole of labour. These groupings are also closely aligned to certain political parties. We are not sure that is a role labour should play.

The response to the letter has been 'heartening', he adds. - *Robyn Rafel*

### THE NEW RIGHT

## The Uncle Tom freedom fighters

ON THE last Friday of October, Zimbabwe Unity Movement leader Edgar Tekere could be found some 30km out of Johannesburg enjoying that much-loved South African form of entertainment, the braaivleis.

If eyebrows were raised it was not because of the Afrikaner-inspired cuisine (after all, United Democratic Front treason trialists have been known for their addiction to biltong) but because of the company.

Tekere's hosts on this occasion were the Federal Independent Democratic Alliance (Fida), whose affinity to Tekere was explained in their letter of invitation: 'He has first-hand experience of Africanisation and is a strong opponent of Marxism and the one-party system', the letter stated.

Fida, headed by 52-year-old former churchman John Gogotya, was brought into being in mid-1987 - a year into South Africa's longest state of emergency and in circumstances where tens of thousands of UDF supporters had been detained without trial.

Following Fida's launch, Gogotya expressed strong opposition to the UDF - which 'had high on its

agenda plans to necklace black moderates like us' - and to the system of one person, one vote. 'We have seen what this has done to the rest of Africa', he said. 'It has brought oppression and deprivation to the whole continent'.

The man who believed just two years ago that ANC leader Nelson Mandela was 'in jail by his own choice', hailed Tekere as a freedom fighter.

And, within a week of the Tekere braai, Gogotya and his team were closeted in the Union Buildings with president FW de Klerk jockeying for a place at the negotiating table and asserting that - provided one did away with 'simplistic models such as the "Westminster system"' - the principle of one person, one vote could be respected.

Fida claims anything between 300 000 and 600 000 supporters. Its activities are all-but unreported. Gogotya claims this is not because the organisation does little of note, but because the media has systematically boycotted its events.

Fida has been seen in anti-apartheid circles as a state project, as part of the counter-revolutionary strategy pursued since the mid-80s by the Botha regime, which involved smashing democratic organisations and inserting government-sponsored structures into the resultant vacuum.

The suspicion arose not only from the timing of the Fida launch, but also from Gogotya's association with Maboyi Zondo who in turn was linked with a vigilante group which operated with impunity in its war against UDF-aligned groups in the Eastern Transvaal town of Leandra.

While Gogotya has always denied government links, until recently he

refused to disclose alternative sources of sponsorship. Now he states that South African business, often through the Afrikaanse Sakekamer, is a major benefactor. So, he says, are multinational oil companies.

He remains insistent that Fida receives no foreign funds. But it is quite clear that the organisation considers itself part of an international anti-Marxist movement. Propaganda of the International Freedom Foundation adorns the walls of its Johannesburg head office.

And Gogotya is also chairman of the Progressive Alliance, which makes claims on Christianity in its stridently anti-ANC/SACP pitch and has Richard J Harty of the World Commonwealth Foundation manning its Washington office.

Tekere's primary South African host is considerably less contentious than Fida. He is Phil Khumalo, described in the press two years ago as Johannesburg's 'fastest growing black businessman' and head of a venture called Business Challenge.

Khumalo, the first black South African to be granted a Nashua franchise and a former lecturer in small business development at Wits University business school, sent his daughter and designated successor, Pam, to university in Harare.

The motto of Business Challenge, says sales co-ordinator Sydney Maisela, is 'we put people into business'. He adds that party-political alignment is out. 'We deal with anybody, but anybody'.

Business Challenge does this in a number of ways: by collectively investing the modest contributions of its members with the Allied Building Society, in an elaboration of the stokvel principle, and providing



collateral for loans made by Allied.

Secondly it links the 'informal sector' very firmly with big capital, providing agents for major manufacturers - including the United Tobacco Company, which markets a wide range of cigarettes.

Apolitical as Business Challenge affects to be, it is certainly a second circuit to big capital and hardly the shortest route of access to any of the liberation organisations in the country. Fida, without doubt, is inimical to simple non-racial democracy and the organisations which promote it.

No doubt, as he extended his stay in South Africa Tekere reached beyond these initial sponsors. But his strange entree does more than tease. It calls to mind his electoral alliance early this year with Ian Smith's all-white Electoral Alliance. - *WIP Correspondent*

## MERGER

# One post office, one union

A MERGER with two other post office staff associations and privatisation of the post office are two key items on the agenda for the Post and Telecommunication Workers' Association (Potwa) congress in Johannesburg in January next year.

Other matters that will come up for discussion are negotiations between the African National Congress and the government and greater participation by Potwa members in civic associations.

Potwa president Kgabisi Mosunkutu says a merger with the 5 300-strong Postal

Employees Association of SA (Peasa), whose membership is predominantly coloured, and the SA Post and Telecommunication Employees' Association (Saptea), which has 1 260 Indian members, has been on the cards for some time.

Says Mosunkutu: 'The congress will open the way for the merger with Peasa and Saptea - probably in the middle of next year. At the same time Potwa will be transformed into a fully-fledged trade union, in line with a resolution adopted at our 1988 congress. After that the major challenge will be to organise white workers into the union'. - *Henson Sompetha*

## LABOUR

# Bantustan union trade-offs

TRADE unions have not wasted time in exerting their influence in Ciskei and Transkei where they have recently been given the green light to operate: they've pushed the two bantustans into making changes to the new labour laws.

As reported in *WIP* 69, the new labour dispensation in Transkei came into effect in June and in Ciskei in July. In late September and early October Cosatu requested further concessions in talks with Ciskei's Brigadier Oupa Gqozo and Transkei's General Bantu Holomisa. Briefly, the changes Cosatu has won in Ciskei are:

- farm and domestic workers, and those employed in small businesses (concerns employing less than 20 workers), who were previously excluded from

the ambit of the new law, will now be covered by it. Farm and domestic workers are already covered in Transkei;

- workers are no longer required to give employers 24 hours notice if they intend going on strike. By the same token, bosses do not have to give notice if they intend imposing a lock-out;
- the 180-day time limit for parties to refer disputes to conciliation boards is to be extended;
- requirements for trade union registration will be simplified. Two unions are already registered: the SA Clothing & Textile Workers' Union (Sactwu) and the SA Municipal Workers' Union. Both are Cosatu affiliates. Sactwu and two other Cosatu unions - the National Union of Metalworkers and the Chemical Workers'

Industrial Union - are registered in Transkei. In its talks with Holomisa, Cosatu asked for the law to be extended to cover government and parastatal workers and for union registration procedures to be simplified.

No details of the concessions the Transkei military leader is prepared to make were available when *WIP* went to press, although Cosatu regional chair Thembinkosi Mkalipi said the discussion was 'very good and positive'. Nevertheless, both leaders are still firmly excluding civil servants from being covered by the new laws.

Gqozo, clearly threatened by the prospect of strikes in the public service and journalists not toeing the line, has announced that journalists at Radio Ciskei are regarded as civil servants. - *Louise Flanagan*

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