



Number 4, February 1989

This is the international campaign bulletin of the 'Blood, Tears, Repression' campaign of NUMSA (National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa) seeking to win justice in South Africa's longest-ever industrial dispute for the 950 long-service workers sacked by BTR Sarmcol (subsidiary of giant UK multinational BTR plc) in May 1985 after a 2-day strike over basic trade union rights. The bulletin is sent to organisations

and individuals supporting the campaign, which has developed around the many thousands of people in Britain who saw the Sarmcol Workers' Cultural Cooperative's play 'The Long March', in 1987, and 'The Sisters of the Long March' performances, in 1988.

NB: This bulletin is sent on request. Please fill in and return the slip on page 4 if you wish to remain on the mailing list.



The Sisters on stage at 'The Corn Exchange', Cambridge, 1988 before an audience of 1,000 people. (Photo: Mojo Pace.)

## Sisters Spread the Message Across Britain: 'In South Africa, BTR means 'Blood, Tears, Repression'

The five young women from the strike-bound township of Mpophomeni - and, for the first month, their two older comrades from Pietermaritzburg - had audiences in all corners of Britain dancing in the aisle as they pounded out the rhythms of the youth movement in South Africa's black townships.

With the galvanising 'toy-toyi' campaigning dance they took the message 'BTR = Blood, Tears, Repression' and 'In South Africa, Dunlop plays Dirty' to 55 audiences in their 10 week tour. Advance publicity in the form of colourful posters and leaflets, together with widespread use of local radio and press, made quite sure that the message got across to the local public as well.

Generous contributions from audiences and supporters, moved by the courage and commitment of the Sisters in taking the story of their community's 3 and 1/2 year long strike ordeal to the people in the home country of BTR, ensured that over £20,000 was raised after all tour overheads had been cleared.

The Sisters also visited the BTR Head Office in London (see photo) to invite BTR directors to see any of their London performances. BTR did not make use of these complimentary tickets, but what BTR did do in the latter part of 1988 was to appoint their own 'spin doctor' - a director of public relations - to polish up BTR's tarnished 'public image'.

NUMSA commented on this development:

"BTR used to say that nothing mattered except its profits. Now it's being pushed to think again about that. But with BTR directors' fees up to £100,000 a year now, BTR could be paying ONE person an amount of money to 'fix' their image that, if shared out among the HUNDREDS of sacked long-term Sarmcol workers, would save them from starvation. What BTR should 'fix' is their corporate behaviour. If they do that they won't have an 'image' problem!"



Outside BTR Head Office, Vincent Square, London, December 1988, the Sisters, together with the SAWCO chair, deliver complimentary tickets to the BTR directors to attend their London performances.

Outside the Church of England's financial investment office, Millbank, London. In May 1988, NUMSA asked the Church to use its 4 million shareholding in BTR to demand answers from the company about its treatment of the BTR Sarmcol strikers. When no reply was forthcoming by December 1988 this picket at midday (opposite the houses of parliament) finally evoked a response.



# The Campaign in South Africa

Inside South Africa, the support for the Sarmcol strikers comes mainly from NUMSA and organised BTR workers. Apart from Sarmcol, BTR has another nine plants in South Africa employing over 5,000 workers. NUMSA and the COSATU Chemical affiliate, CWIU, have organised 2/3 of these workers.

The organised BTR workers coordinate wage and other demands to BTR in South Africa by the BTR National Shop Steward Council. The Council resolved at its meeting on 28 January 1989 to declare a dispute with BTR over a set of four demands, first of which is the Sarmcol issue. During February and March 1989, workers at all BTR plants will ballot on industrial action, and they are simultaneously collecting funds for a mass meeting of ALL organised BTR workers in South Africa to consider the ballot result and plan appropriate action.

## Bongani Mkhungo

The chairperson of the BTR National Shop Stewards' Council was unfairly dismissed by BTR in 1988 within months of returning from the company's 1988 AGM in London, and a round of fraternal visits to British BTR workers.

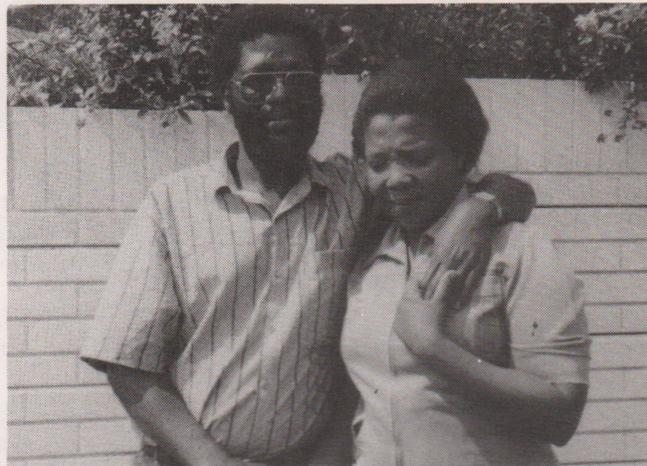
After a strike ballot, industrial action in support of Bongani's reinstatement was launched in October 1988, but within three days BTR obtained a court interdict (injunction) under the new, more-repressive Labour Relations Act. The interdict is being challenged in court by NUMSA, but if the challenge fails it will mean a massive erosion of strike rights: sacking will be defined as entirely a managerial prerogative which is not open to contest via industrial action!

*Bongani Mkhungo with BTR workers in Leicester in June 1988. Bongani will be in Britain again in March/April 1989 accompanying Khola Mayekiso on her TUC-sponsored tour (see photo below).*



## BTR workers, UNITE!

1. A first-ever meeting of BTR shopfloor reps from Britain, South Africa and the USA took place in Manchester in September 1988 at the invitation of the GMBATU. A message of solidarity was received from Trinidadian BTR comrades also. The meeting pledged to work for sustained ongoing linkages between BTR workers worldwide.
2. Following their attendance by NUMSA and CWIU reps at the Tokyo Conference of the ICEF (International Chemical Workers' Federation) in December, plans are now proceeding to extend the existing range of contacts between BTR workers to Australia and New Zealand, where BTR is expanding rapidly.



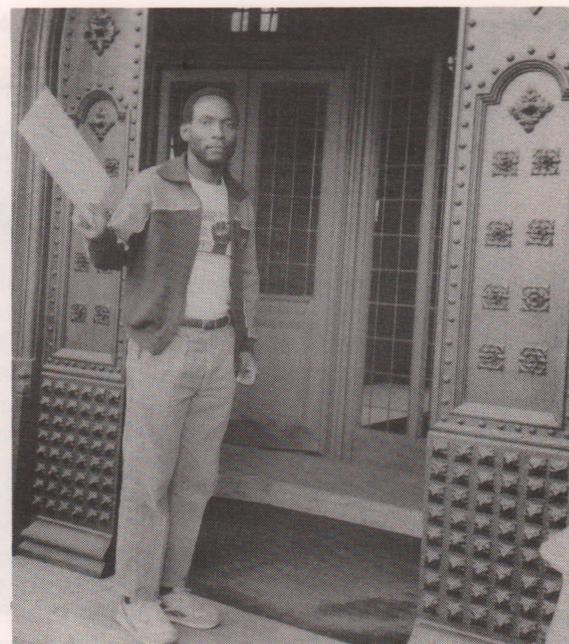
*Khola and Moses Mayekiso, January 1989: Together again after 2 and 1/2 years, but for how long? Khola's UK tour (5 March to 2 April) is being coordinated through the regional TUCs.*

## Who Owns BTR??

BTR has issued around 1600 million shares (which sell for around £3 these days on the stock exchange). There are no dominant shareholding bodies (in the way for example that Anglo American and De Beers dominate Minorco) but the weightiest sectoral representation is that of financial institutions like insurance and assurance companies: Prudential, Eagle Star, Sun Life, Colonial Mutual etc. It was to this sector that Sir Owen Green, BTR chair, was presumably referring at last year's AGM when he told shareholders - angry at his conduct of the meeting - that he did not have to listen to them anyway since he had enough proxy votes in his pocket to run the meeting exactly as he pleased!

However, the list below (which comes from Company House's 1988 listings) reveals that many substantial and very substantial shareholders are worth approaching. For share dividends earned amidst the misery of the starving Sarmcol strikers and their communities are potentially embarrassing, and to some even morally unacceptable. The more voices there are calling on such shareholders to act in support of NUMSA's campaign the more such shareholders are likely to exercise a social responsibility in relation to their BTR shares.

Follow Philip Dladla's example! (See photo)



*Philip Dladla, chair of SAWCO and of the BTR Sarmcol Shop Stewards' Committee, delivers a letter to the Church of England Investment office, holder of 4 million BTR shares. Within weeks the Church wrote back to Philip reporting on their interventions with BTR about the Sarmcol dispute.*

### County Councils

Suffolk 0.8 million	Clwyd 0.7 million
Derbyshire 1.7 million	Cornwall 0.5 million
Devon nearly 1 million	Cumbria 0.8 million
Dorset 0.48 million	Durham 1.2 million
East Sussex 0.6 million	Dyfed 0.4 million
Avon 1.3 million	Essex 2.2 million
Berkshire 1.4 million	Somerset 0.08 million
Cleveland 2 million	Surrey 0.8 million

W. Glamorgan 0.4 million  
W. Sussex 1 million  
Gloucester 1 million  
Gwent 1.1 million  
Gwynedd 0.6 million  
Hampshire 1 million  
Humberside 0.6 million  
Isle of Wight 0.2 million  
Kent 1.7 million  
Leicestershire 0.4 million

Fife Regional Council 23,000  
Lincolnshire 0.6 million  
Mid Glamorgan 0.6 million  
Northumberland 0.3 mill.  
Nottinghamshire 1.4 mill.  
Oxfordshire 0.4 million  
Local Authorities Mutual Investment Trust 1 mill.  
Lothian Regional Council 1.4 million

### Church-related shareholdings

Church Commissioners, Church of England 4 million  
Church of England Children's Society 0.1 million  
Church of England Nominees 1.5 million  
Cathedral Church of St Nicholas, Newcastle on Tyne 5,000  
Calvinist Methodist Church of Wales 12,000  
Birmingham Roman Catholic Diocesan Trustees 10,000  
Very Rev. Alexander Barrass, Bishops House, Newcastle-on-Tyne 24,000  
His Eminence Cardinal George Basil Hume OSB 650  
Methodist Church, Central Finance Board 0.3 million  
Plymouth Roman Catholic Diocesan Trustees 85,000

Leprosy Mission Corp 23,000  
Maynooth Mission to China 15,000  
United Reformed Church (Southern Province) Trust 10,000  
UK Temperance and General Provident Institution 2.2 million  
United Synagogue Trusts 50,000  
Cathedral Church of Durham 9,000 & 3,000  
Christchurch, Oxford 1 million  
Church of Ireland, Representative Church Body 0.2 million  
Trustee for Roman Catholic Purposes 0.18 million  
Presbyterian Church in Northern Ireland, Trustees 50,000

### Universities

Cambridge: Chancellor, Masters, Scholars 0.8 million  
Oxford: Nuffield College 54,000  
Oxford: Keele College 12,000  
Queens University, Belfast 20,000  
Cambridge: St John's College 75,000  
University of London 75,000  
University of Bristol 12,000  
University of Liverpool 75,000 and 90,000  
University of Wales 10,000  
University College of Wales 31,000  
University of Hull 22,000  
Cambridge: Christ's College 21,000  
Cambridge: Corpus Christi 30,000  
Cambridge: Fitzwilliam College 15,000

# SAWCO UPDATE

As the fourth anniversary of the strike approaches... *A LUTA CONTINUA!*

## How SAWCO started

SAWCO, the Sarmcol Workers' Co-operative, was started at the end of 1985 as a focus for striker and community self-organisation. Several 'co-ops' were established: T-shirt printing; agricultural; cultural; health; bulk-buying; transport. These were tied together by a central SAWCO administration, and linked in to the strike by weekly strikers' meeting.

## The SAWCO co-ops

SAWCO faced immense problems: the Sarmcol workers were skilled only at the work they did for BTR, and many were no longer young. As the years on strike went by, the best-educated, least family-

## Sawco's Cultural Project Presents

# Bhambatha's Children



and youngest/healthiest strikers were the only ones able to find alternate work of any sort, leaving SAWCO with the vast majority of strikers but with a shortage of skills.

Despite these problems, by 1989, two of the co-ops are approaching self-sufficiency: the T-shirt co-op (now diversifying into silk screening for the garment industry) and the cultural co-op (now touring South Africa with the new play 'Bambatha's Children'). The service-style co-ops which cannot, by their nature, seek income from outside the strike bound community will always require subsidy to perform their important social functions. Planning is proceeding to restructure these co-ops during 1989 around this accepted reality.

## The strikers' legal battle drags on ... and on ...

The strikers wait for the outcome of the Industrial Court Review which is to be heard in court from 20 - 24 February 1989. This review follows the September 1987 Industrial Court verdict which declined to order the reinstatement of the strikers, amidst allegations of blatant bias of court officials in favour of BTR. The NUMSA legal team asked a prominent neutral jurist for an opinion on the court proceedings, and were advised that 'IN LAW' NUMSA had an excellent case to challenge the verdict and should demand a review. It must be acknowledged that a good case 'in law' may not be enough to win justice in the context of this case. But even a review finding favourable to NUMSA will simply mean a retrial ie. starting AGAIN the whole legal process which took 18 months the first time!

## The campaign

Whatever the legal verdict, the campaign will continue. NUMSA only went to court in the first place because BTR refused to negotiate, yet as soon as this happened BTR used the legal battle as the reason why it could not enter into negotiations! Whatever the outcome of the court case, the demand remains the same: BTR must negotiate a settlement for its starving long term employees.



Mpophomeni Cemetery: The youth lead the cortege up to the desolate graveyard.



Harry Gwala, veteran SACTU organiser, just released from political prison, leads the crowd to the graveside.



David Madupela, first vice-president of NUMSA, opens the graveside ceremony at the veiled tombstones of the Mpophomeni comrades.

# Generations of Resistance

## December 1988

Two years after two BTR Sarmcol strike leaders and two Mpophomeni youth leaders were abducted and assassinated by Inkatha vigilantes, NUMSA and the Community of Mpophomeni honoured their memory by erecting decent tombstones over their graves in the desolate Mpophomeni graveyard.

The graveyard ceremony was preceded by an all-night community vigil at the Mpophomeni Church Hall. And in the morning the youth of Mpophomeni headed the cortege of cars and busses on the two kilometre route to the cemetery, pounding out with bare feet on the gravel township road the 'toy-toyi' campaigning dance.

Guest of honour for the occasion, just released from his second decade-long spell in political prison, was Harry Gwala, veteran SACTU trade union official and ANC stalwart, who had started

the organisation of Sarmcol workers in the 1950s. Physically frail, but strong in mind and voice, Gwala told the graveside crowds that their oppression sprang not only from racism but from exploitation by multinational companies. He saluted the fallen comrades, the latest martyrs in the generations of resistance in that area, and condemned the (black) collaborators with oppression who had murdered them. Gwala called for international solidarity and workers' unity to fight the forces of worldwide imperialism, which, through their agents like BTR, always leave the poor, like the people at Mpophomeni, to starve.

- A very substantial contribution to the cost of the tombstones came from supporters of the NUMSA 'Blood, Tears, Repression' campaign in Scotland. From the families, comrades and community of the deceased to the Scottish comrades, most heartfelt thanks.



Harry Gwala delivers the memorial oration.



Maxwell Xulu, COSATU treasurer and NUMSA CEC member, unveils the tombstone of Phineas Sibiya, murdered chair of Sarmcol Shop Stewards' Committee.



After the ceremony, NUMSA officials greet Harry Gwala by the tombstone of the murdered Simon Ngubane, author of 'The Long March' play which toured Britain in 1987.

### BTR Shareholders *ctd*

#### Local Authorities

City of Bradford 0.2 million  
 City of Cardiff 10,000  
 City of London 0.3 million  
 City of Westminster 0.6 million  
 Borough of South Tyneside 0.2 million  
 Inverness District Council 2,250  
 Wolverhampton Borough 6.4 million  
 London Borough of Croydon 0.5 million  
 London Borough of Tower Hamlets 0.3 million  
 London Borough of Greenwich 0.4 million  
 London Borough of Hounslow 0.12 million  
 London Borough of Barnet 0.2 million  
 London Borough of Enfield 0.15 million  
 London Borough of Camden 0.68 million  
 London Residuary Body (ex GLC) 6.5 million

#### Some Other Shareholdings of Note

Co-operative Insurance Society 13.3 million  
 East Midlands Co-operative Society 28,000  
 Northern Ireland Local Government Officers Superannuation Committee 1.4 million  
 Professional Association of Teachers Pensions Ltd 1.5 million  
 The Press Association 25,000  
 Royal College of Physicians (London and Glasgow) 0.1 million  
 Royal National Lifeboat Institute 0.14 million  
 RSPCA 0.2 million  
 Multiple Sclerosis Society 3,000  
 NSPCC 0.18 and NSPCC Pensions Scheme 0.1 million  
 Birmingham Voluntary Service Council 18,000  
 Birmingham Post and Mail Staff Pension Fund 0.1 million

# Campaign '89: Support our target actions!

At national level, NUMSA's campaign will focus on two main targets for the first half of '89: The BTR AGM in London in May and the BTR Slazenger Tennis Tournament at Wimbledon in June/July.

## BTR AGM May, London

The campaign is mobilising major and minor shareholders to attend the '89 AGM (exact time/date/venue to be announced early April) and to ask the BTR directors to respond properly to the hard questions about BTR in South Africa which BTR refused to answer at the '88 AGM.

Chair, Sir Owen Green's, 'duck, dive and dodge' technique at question time last year so irritated shareholders that, when Green summarily closed the meeting to avoid further questions, pandemonium resulted. Shareholders had

already been subjected to 'security measures' at the door which amounted to the removal of any copies of the NUMSA's Dossier to Shareholders and any cameras or tape recorders. A 'neutral' (and major) shareholder commented afterwards: 'Judging by the thoroughness of the information-suppression exercise, there must be many skeletons in BTR's cupboard!'

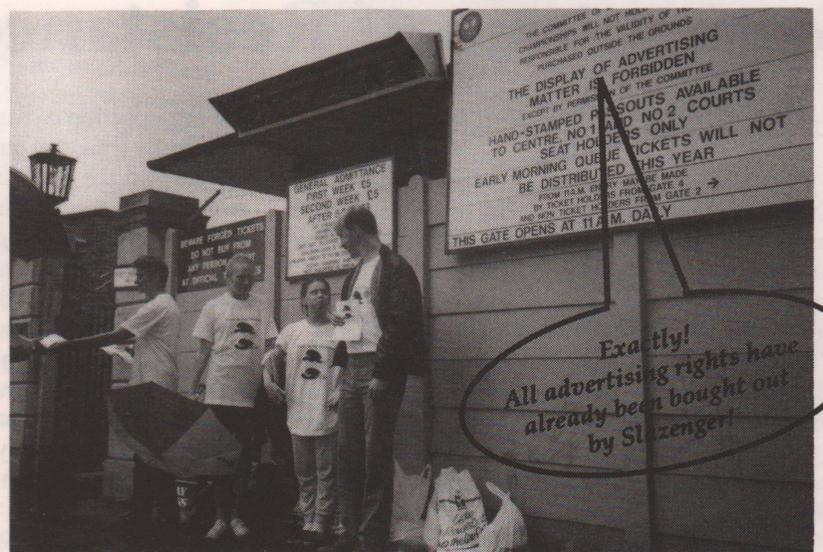
Non-shareholding campaign supporters are invited, as in '88, to demonstrate outside the venue before the AGM starts.



## BTR Slazenger Tennis Finals, Wimbledon

Wimbledon is BTR's top advertising event for its Slazenger sports empire. The NUMSA campaign plans an intensified action at Wimbledon '89 so that when sports fans think of Slazenger, they think simultaneously of what BTR is up to in South Africa: 'It's not sport, BTR!'

*Men's finals day, 1988: the rain won, and leafletters, leaflets and tennis fans got soaked. But NUMSA leaflets and stickers were distributed in large numbers on Women's Day.*



### What Can I Do To Help?

The networks of supporters in most corners of Britain are planning actions at local/regional level for 1989. Contacts, further information and campaign materials are available from:

NUMSA Campaign, P O Box 153, Leicester.

And if you're in reach of London, support the national actions too.

To: NUMSA Campaign, P O Box 153, Leicester

Yes, please keep me on the 'Long March Bulletin' mailing list

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

- Please send me information:  on campaign materials  
 on SAWCO products on sale  
 on the campaign support group in my area

- I enclose a donation of £..... for  relief for strikers and their families  
 use in the campaign