In its six short years of existence, FOSATU played a fundamental role in shaping the traditions and principles of trade unionism in South Africa. It heralded a new form of unionism in which the power lay firmly in the hands of the workers. In its struggle for democratic unionism, FOSATU focused centrally on the shop floor, and on the shop steward. Today, the shop steward is an unquestioned participant in the negotiation process between workers and bosses.

On a practical level, FOSATU raised the living standards of thousands of workers above levels of abject poverty. It enshrined the principles of negotiated wages and service conditions. It can also be argued that the principles of worker democracy laid the foundations for the dynamic democracy that South Africa now enjoys.

Working in a time of extreme political upheaval, FOSATU examined the role of politics in trade unionism, and adopted a policy that allowed the federation to embrace a political role while at the same time asserting its independence and maintaining the worker at the forefront of the struggle.

Today, the political landscape has shifted considerably, as has the nature of trade unionism. Any analysis of the future of trade unionism should engage with the history of FOSATU and the direction and principles that it adopted. It holds valuable lessons for the independence and integrity of trade unions.
ARCHIVAL REFERENCES

The following collections, housed in Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za), were consulted for the production of this book:

1956 Treason Trial Records (AD1812)
Colin Purkey Papers (A1984)
Congress of South African Trade Unions Records (AH2507 and AH2373)
Federation of South African Trade Union Records (AH1999 and AH2680)
Food and Canning Workers Union Records (AD1175)
Garment Workers Union Records (AH1092)
Industrial Aid Society Records (AH1585)
Jane Barrett Papers (A2168)
Metal and Allied Workers’ Union Records (AH1077)
National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa Records (AH2555)
South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union Records (AH2196)
South African Congress of Trade Unions Records (AD1197)
South African Institute of Race Relations Records (AD1788, AD1912 and AD2174)
Taffy Adler Papers (AH2065)
Trade Union Council of South Africa Records (AH646 and AH1426)
Trial Records (AK2130, AK2313)
ARTICLES, BOOKS AND DISSERTATIONS

Borain, Nic (2009): “It is impossible to avoid: Cosatu is the enemy of the unemployed”, September 27, 2009 in Alliance Politics
Buhlungu, Sakhela (2010): “Cosatu: More members but less power”, Mail & Guardian, 4 June 2010
Fairbairn, Jean (1991): Flashes of her Soul: The Life of Jabu Ndlovu, Natal Worker History project
Labour and Community Resources Project (1989): Comrade Moss, Learn and Teach Publications
Qabula, Alfred (1989), *Cruel Beyond Belief*, University of Natal Culture and Working Life Project
*Struggle for Workers’ Rights: A History of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union* (1994) published by the Chemical Workers Industrial Union