



## AL2420 - The South African Tin Workers' Union (SATWU) Collection

Call Number: AL2420  
Title: The South African Tin Workers' Union (SATWU) Collection  
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Inclusive Dates: 1937 - 1978  
Bulk Dates:  
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Use Restrictions: Copyright restrictions may apply. See SAHA copyright statement for Use Restrictions  
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Abstract: Founded in 1937, the South African Tin Workers' Union (SATWU) was registered in 1939 under the Industrial Conciliation Act and organised mainly by Coloured and Indian workers. During the 1946 Passive Resistance Campaign launched by the South African Indian Congress, leading unionists from SATWU served terms of imprisonment. During the 1950s, Ray Alexander, Gus Coe and Ismail Bhoola, the secretaries of the Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg branches respectively, were banned under the Suppression of Communism Act. Also, under this Act, in July 1953, S.V. Reddy, the General Secretary, was banned from attending all gatherings and was forced to resign from the Union. He was succeeded by Billy Nair as secretary of the Union. During the State of Emergency in 1960, when many trade unionists were detained, SATWU managed to negotiate two wage increases for its members. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s SATWU strove to improve the working conditions and wages for those employed in the tin industry.

### Introduction

The South African Tin Workers' Union (SATWU) was founded in August 1937. The initiative for the formation of this union came after workers at the Durban Falkirk Industries went on strike for higher wages. Prominent trade unionists, such as H.A. Naidoo, were at the launch of the union. In 1939 the Union was registered under the Industrial Conciliation Act and as a result organised mainly the Coloured and Indian workers.

In 1941, the first agreement between the employers and the union was reached, giving the workers a substantial rise in wages. During the 1946 Passive Resistance Campaign launched by the South African Indian Congress, leading unionists from SATWU served terms of imprisonment.

SATWU affiliated to the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) upon its formation in 1955. During the 1950s, Ray Alexander, Gus Coe and Ismail Bhoola, secretary's of the Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg branches respectively, were banned under the Suppression of Communism Act. also, under this Act, in July 1953, S.V. Reddy, the General Secretary was banned from attending all gatherings and was forced to resign from the Union. He was succeeded by Billy Nair as secretary of the Union.

After strong pressure from SATWU, the Minister of Labour appointed a Wage Board to investigate the tin industry. This resulted in the Wage Determination No. 173 in 1956 which laid down the minimum wage for the industry. This was a slight improvement on the wages earned at that time.

In 1956, Billy Nair was arrested with 155 others on charges of High Treason. D Thambiran was elected Durban Branch secretary in 1957, and General Secretary of the Union in 1960. In February 1960, the workers at Metal Box in Durban boycotted the canteen in protest against the conditions. Although many trade unionists were detained during the State of Emergency, declared in 1960, SATWU managed to negotiate two wage increases for its members during this period.



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Throughout the 60s and 70s SATWU strove to improve the working conditions and wages for those employed in the tin industry. SATWU also petitioned international metal workers union and the British Trade Union Congress to apply pressure on the parent companies of the South African subsidiaries.

### Acronyms

COSATU - Congress of South African Trade Unions

IMF - International Metalworkers Federation

SATWU - South African Tin Workers' Union

### Notes on the Collection

The collection is very small, 0.3 linear metres. SAHA received it as part of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) collection, but it is clear that it constitutes an archive in its own and was added to the NIC collection by mistake.

### Classification

- A: Constitution
- B: Minutes and notices
- C: Correspondence
- D: Reports and statements
- E: Finances
- F: Array
  - F1: Industrial Conciliation Act
  - F2: Wage Board
- G: Array
  - G1: International Metalworkers Federation
  - G2: British Trade Union Congress
- H: COSATU
- I: Press cuttings

### Inventory

- A: Constitution 1937 - 1951
  - [1937]
- B: Minutes and notices of the National Executive Committee. 1967 - 1977 Incomplete
  - [1967]
- C: Correspondence
  - C1: General correspondence to officials, branches, shop-stewards and members concerning the union. Also includes correspondence with employers and the Trade Union Congress of South Africa (TUCSA) 1969 1977
    - [1969 1977]
  - C2: Correspondence with the Metal Box Company of SA Ltd relating to the working conditions and rights of union members 1959 1971
    - [1959]
  - C3: Correspondence with Main Tin Manufacturers Ltd concerning working conditions and the rights of union members 1964 - 1969
    - [1964 - 1969]
  - C4: General correspondence by the Durban Branch relating to worker issues. 1952 1959



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[1952 1959]

*Includes correspondence by Branch secretary, Billy Nair*

### D: Reports and statements. c1970s

[c1970s]

*Includes the secretary, D Thambiran's annual report to the 41st AGM, 1978; 25th silver jubilee anniversary souvenir brochure; Memorandum by Tea and Coffee Workers' Union to the Natal Tea, Coffee and Chicory Association, 1970; Memorandum of proposals for improved wages and working conditions submitted by SATWU, n.d.; Speech 'Equal justice for all mankind' by Wilfred Jenks, Director-General of ILO, 1971*

### E: Finances. Financial statements and miscellaneous accounts. Incomplete 1960 - 1971

[1960]

### F: Industrial Coalition Act

#### F1: Industrial Conciliation Act. 1960 -1977

[1960]

*Correspondence and registration of the union under the act*

#### F2: Wage Board. Memoranda, submissions, and correspondence relating to wage determinations for the tin industry 1948 - 1970

[1948]

### G: International Metalworkers Federation

#### G1: International Metalworkers Federation (IMF). 1972 1976

[1972]

*Correspondence relating to affiliation of SATWU to IMF and support for the union over dispute with Metal Box*

#### G2: British Trade Union Congress (TUC). 1972 1974

[1972]

*Correspondence and press cuttings relating to SATWU's dispute with Metal Box*

### H: Congress Of South African Trade Unions

#### H1: Minutes of the COSATU Central Executive Committee meetings, special COSATU REC, National Education Committee meeting, and a meeting of the COSATU REC and the UDF REC. 1986 1987 Incomplete

[1986]

#### H2: COSATU constitution, reports, statements, pamphlets and incomplete set of 'Information Digest' c1980s

[c1980s]

*Includes reports on 'On Imbali stage one' and 'Nutw internal dispute'*

#### H3: COSATU Correspondence 1986 1989

[1986]

#### H4: Miscellaneous. Reports, pamphlets, and newsletters of various unions. c1980s

[c1980s]

*Includes minutes of 'Feasibility Meeting' held on 3 March 1984 relating to unity talks between the various independent trade unions and FOSATU*

### I: Press cuttings on union action c1971

[c1971]