

CITY PRESS, March 11th, 1984

Workers unite to form super-union

SOUTH AFRICA's largest black worker federation is about to be born.

That is the upshot of last weekend's trade union unity talks in Johannesburg, which brought together leaders from more than 20 unions.

Political and labour observers interviewed by City Press this week hailed the unity decision as being of enormous importance. They pointed out that working class politics was rapidly moving centre-stage in opposition to apartheid.

The new federation

is likely to be formed some time after September and embrace 300 000 workers — rivalling the huge, conservative Tucsá grouping.

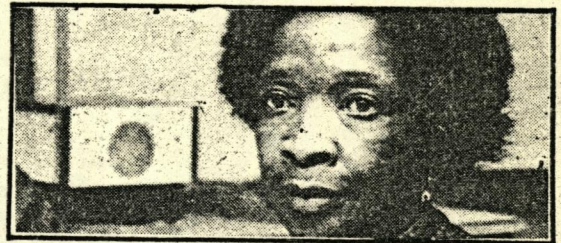
Unions who dedicated themselves to unity last weekend are those in the Federation of SA Trade Unions and Council of SA Union groupings, the two Food and Canning Workers' Unions, the Cape-based General Workers' Union, the Cape Town Municipal Employees' Association, and Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union of SA.

But a cloud over the

unity decision has been the alienation of the SA Allied Workers' Union, General and Allied Workers' Union, and the Municipal and General Workers' Union. These unions were offered only observer status at the talks, and walked out as a result.

However, unity talks convenor Emma Mashinini told City Press there was "no hostility towards these unions" and they could rejoin the unity talks later as observers — or once they had transformed themselves into industrial unions.

Saawu president Thozamile Gqweta de-



EMMA MASHININI: "No hostility."

clined to comment on his union's exclusion.

The proposed new federation will bring together unions embracing non-racial as well as black exclusivist positions.

The majority view at the weekend talks was that unity had to be forged between industrial unions organising in the same industry, with the eventual aim of having only one powerful union for each industry.

The general workers' unions were complicating and delaying this process, in this view.

The exception was the Cape-based GWU, which restricted itself largely to three industries.

Interestingly, Sactu recently came out in favour of industrial unions, adding that the historical role of general workers' unions was past.

**HOWARD
BARRELL**