

FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



July 1982



WORKERS on the march during the Progress Knitting strike in Hammarsdale. The strike was won by the NUTW and has resulted in many more workers in the area joining the union. See page 4.

IMF expels two SA trade unions

Others warned to
get rid of
apartheid – or
go out as well

THE International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) has expelled two South African trade unions and has warned two other unions to get rid of apartheid in their organisations – or be expelled as well.

This far-reaching decision was taken at a meeting of the IMF's Central Committee in Rome last month.

The move has come after years of conflict between metal unions operating in South Africa.



FRED Sauls, general secretary of NAAWU, was one of the delegates from FOSATU unions to the IMF central committee meeting in Rome.

Automobile and Allied Workers' Union (NAAWU) and the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) – both FOSATU and IMF affiliates – made certain allegations concerning the activities of other IMF affiliates to a visiting IMF delegation.

STATEMENTS

Written statements were filed about the activities of the Radio, Television, Electronic and Allied Workers' Union, the Engineering Industrial Workers' Union, the SA Electrical Workers' Union and the Amalgamated Engineering Union.

It was alleged that these unions practised racism, showed an attitude of paternalism rather than of co-operation, and in some cases actively undermined fellow IMF delegates.

The statements noted the following:

- During disputes at Heineman (1976), Eveready (1978) and Dorbyl (1981), the unions concerned undermined strikers and in some cases collaborated with management and the Department of Labour to force a settlement against the wishes of the unions involved in the disputes.

- They have ignored requests

to caucus about wage demands before wage negotiations in which they have been involved.

OBJECTED

- They objected to MAWU's registration application on racial grounds, which is out of keeping with internationally accepted principles and those of the IMF.

- The four unions submitted a memorandum to the Wiehahn commission asking that blacks should do military service on the border before they were given apprenticeship training.

- They have also practised segregation by either working only among white workers or by having parallel unions for workers of different races, normally dominated by

the white unions.

At last month's meeting, all the parties were present and each union was given a chance to present its point of view. After considerable debate the SAEWU and AEU were expelled while the other two unions were given a year to get rid of apartheid in their organisations and put their house in order.

IMPLICATIONS

The decision has several important implications. It is the first time that a major international body has taken action against South African unions for practising apartheid.

It is also feared that some of the expelled unions may hit back and veto the stop order exemption currently granted to MAWU by

the metal industrial council, of which those unions are members.

It is believed that the South African government took an interest in the proceedings and it was reported that a representative of the SA embassy had met with at least one of the expelled unions in Rome.

COUNCIL

Metal unions affiliated to the IMF used to meet together on a co-ordinating council, which became defunct two years ago when the conflict between them worsened.

Now, following the expulsions, the remaining IMF affiliates will meet to see if there is sufficient common ground and goodwill to revive the council.

Quick jump in PG profits

PLATE Glass (Pty) Ltd recently refused to meet a 15 percent pay demand by workers organised by the Glass and Allied Workers' Union, saying it could only afford a 4 percent increase

However, the company quickly changed its tune when workers started collecting money for a strike

fund – and deposited their contributions of R10 a week with the company's personnel officer.

The original offer was suddenly increased to 15 percent and the threatened strike was called off.

GAWU organiser Wesley Dumo has commented: "It's sad that managements have to be threatened by strike action before paying

workers their just rewards. Before the strike threat, Plate Glass management produced figures to 'prove' to workers that they could not afford more than a 4 percent increase.

"Suddenly, however, they found the money. Workers should not be blamed for disbelieving management statements about profitability."