

Retrenched workers paid R2 500

RETRENCHED workers from Triple A Rubber at Prospecton near Durban have won R2 500 in an out-of-court settlement.

On September 28, the company went ahead and retrenched 25 Metal and Allied Workers Union members without any consultation.

When MAWU threatened to take court action, Triple A offered to settle.

As well as the lump sum, the company agreed to take back workers with the longest service first when jobs become available.

Fear of mass retrenchments

THE Metal and Allied Workers Union fears that metal employers will retrench hundreds of migrant workers during the Christmas break without even bothering to consult unions.

And MAWU has attacked the industrial court for making this possible.

MAWU says that the recent Screenex judgement has effectively removed all the rights of migrant workers to fair retrenchment procedures.

Previous industrial court judgements have set out what it considers to be fair procedures.

The court has said that employers must consider possible ways of avoiding retrenchments - like transfers, stopping overtime and working short time.

Employers must also consult

Documents 'mysteriously' vanish

SIX copies of a document which accuses a German multi-national of grossly mistreating workers at its South African plant have 'mysteriously' disappeared.

The copies of the document join the large amount of union mail which has 'gone astray' - as it tends to do in South Africa.

The document which details the dispute between the Metal and Allied Workers Union and Transvaal Alloys (a subsidiary of Nord-Deutsche Affinerie of Hamburg, Germany) was on its way to the head office of the International Metalworkers Federation.

The IMF has agreed to raise the dispute with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the European Economic Community (EEC).

The ILO consists of representatives from trade unions, employers and governments from countries worldwide whereas the EEC is an organisation consisting of representatives from the various European governments.

In the lengthy document, MAWU has set out the circumstances of the dispute, in which more than 200 workers were dismissed from the vanadium mine and plant near Middelburg.

MAWU has accused Transvaal Alloys of breaking many clauses of the ILO's Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multi-national Enterprises and EEC's Code of Conduct covering companies which operate in South Africa.

The document accuses the company of:

- * paying starvation wages of 55 cents an hour, which is well below the minimums specified in the codes.
- * denying workers trade union rights and representation.
- * subjecting workers to racial discrimination.
- * subjecting workers to assaults.
- * breaching international standards on human rights.
- * failing to promote security of employment.
- * failing to maintain high standards of health.
- * failing to consult, examine grievances or attempt to settle disputes.
- * failure to alleviate the suffering caused by the migrant labour system.

The dismissed workers have appealed to the ILO and the EEC to intervene on their behalf with the multi-national company.

Brian Fredericks, IMF secretary in South Africa, said that the IMF has agreed to do all in its power to assist the workers who have been 'subjected to the full rigours of South Africa's migrant labour system'.

The workers, who were all arrested and fined during the strike, have been sent home to Sekhukhune.

'They and their families have been starving, with no money and no chance of employment, for nearly a year since they were dismissed,' a MAWU organiser said.

Call for one powerful union made at meeting



SINGING workers at the Annual General Meeting of the Transvaal branch of the Metal and Allied Workers Union held at the KwaThema stadium. Well over 4 000 workers attended the meeting in spite of transport difficulties. A Springs bus company refused to send buses into the KwaThema township and only informed the union days before the AGM. In a resolution passed at the meeting, the workers called for all metal unions to merge into one powerful union in order to effectively oppose the giant metal employers' association, SEIFSA. The resolution calling for unity was closely linked with other resolutions condemning SEIFSA for its 'manipulative' role in industrial council wage talks. The workers committed themselves to continuing the fight for a living wage into 1985. Other important resolutions urged the union to oppose retrenchments and to fight for proper family accommodation. The workers also attacked influx control and the 'Koornhof Bills' as 'instruments of apartheid'. The metal workers resolved to fight for proper democracy and a free society where wealth would be more equally distributed.

worker representatives and these representatives must be given sufficient prior warning of the retrenchments.

The court has also said that employers when selecting workers for retrenchment should consider things like length of service.

In the Screenex case, MAWU charged that this Alrode company unfairly laid off 10 migrant workers because it had not followed established retrenchment procedures.

However, in a judgement issued nearly two years after the original dispute, the court ruled that the migrant workers had not been retrenched when their contracts were not renewed.

The judgement says that the only obligation on the employer

in laying off migrant workers is 'to give the employee reasonable notice'.

The most horrifying aspect of this is that SEIFSA, the metal employers' association, earlier this year suggested that metal employers change migrant workers' contracts to allow them to only give 24 hours' notice.

MAWU said that the court's decision 'just emphasizes that migrant labour contracts are purely an instrument of repression and give workers no legal rights or protection'.

'South African workers will have to ask themselves whether they can still benefit from a court which is becoming highly conservative and which does not protect the interests of workers', the union said.

Pension fund changes demanded by PWAWU

IN its first national meeting with the Mondi Group, the Shop Stewards Council has proposed major changes to the Mondi pension fund.

Recently, the Mondi Shop Stewards Council, which represents workers at all six of the Group's factories, met with management and officials of the pension fund and presented 15 proposals.

The proposed changes include:

- * pension money must be paid out as a lump sum on retirement or death.
- * it should not be compulsory to join the pension fund.
- * the company should provide loans to workers, interest free,

using the money in the pension fund as security.

* an early retirement age of 55 years must be introduced for those who wish to retire before they reach 63.

A PWAWU spokesperson said Mondi had agreed 'in principle' to make changes to the pension fund.

'Mondi and the pension fund trustees are now considering the union's proposals before the next meeting with the Shop Stewards Council,' she said.

In 1982, PWAWU negotiated significant changes to the SAPPI Group pension fund through the shop stewards committee at the Tugela mill at Mandini.

Highest wage in FOSATU

END of year wage talks has hiked up the minimum wage of Reckitt and Colman workers in the Transvaal to R2.94 per hour - the highest minimum wage in FOSATU.

The wage agreement negotiated with the Chemical Workers Industrial Union wins workers a R20 across-the-board increase.

Branch secretary, Chris Bonner said the union was delighted with the settlement 'particularly as management is tending to use the recession as an excuse to keep increases low'.

Meanwhile, in the union's first negotiations at Pilkington Glass in Port Elizabeth, the minimum wage has been raised by 36c to R2.74 per hour.

Brits hall burnt out by 'vandals'

BEFORE dawn on October 23, a church hall in the Brits old location, which was extensively used by FOSATU unions, was burnt out.

This is the latest in a series of incidents of vandalism aimed at FOSATU unions.

The Brits hall was the daily meeting place of the B & S workers during their year-long struggle.

A Metal and Allied Workers Union organiser said the hall had made it possible for the workers in the Brits area to organise themselves into trade unions.

'The unions in Brits have made great strides for workers and obviously some people are not happy with that,' said the chairman of the local Shop Stewards Council.

Some months back, the Chemical Workers Industrial Union's office at Evander was broken into and posters were ripped off the walls.

Union organiser, Tsidiso Mthupi said all the files and documents from the filing cabinet had also been taken.

On the typewriter he found a note saying 'pass the message on to the ANC'.

And recently messages were spray painted on to the walls outside the FOSATU offices in Pinetown.

The spray painted writing said 'the ANC was here' and 'Kaffir lover'.

FOSATU believes that the acts of vandalism have been carried out by right-wing elements.



The 'artistic' work of a right-wing vandal on the walls of the Pinetown office