

I started work at Kempar in 1981. About a month after I had started, the induna came up to me and said he fancied me and wanted to sleep with me.

When I protested and explained to him that I had my own man, he told me that he wasn't expecting me to reject my husband. He was only asking me for sexual favours.

The induna kept on pestering me but I kept on rejecting him. He then threatened to clock me off and then take me to the foreman. He said I would then be fired for refusing his 'request'.

One Friday afternoon the induna gave me money and asked me to buy him some foodstuffs. He said I must take them to his room on Sunday night so that I could spend the night with him and then go to work on Monday morning.

Resisted pressures

When I refused the induna accused me of thinking that I was better than other women who offered him what he wanted. After all, the induna said, all women in KwaZulu have five or six private lovers at a time.

This woman worker managed to resist the pressures of the ind-

una but she said her cousin was not so lucky.

My cousin had been sleeping with the induna because she was worried about losing her job.

When one day she felt she had 'offered enough of her body' and decided to refuse she was fired.

Tried to explain

The workers approached the manager to try and explain to him that the real reason for my cousin's dismissal was that she was now refusing to sleep with the induna.

The manager just dismissed it as a lie, because, he said, she was not the most beautiful woman in the factory.

Another Kempar woman took up the story saying that the same induna had asked her if she would sleep with her. She refused but he persisted.

Whenever I ran out of material he would take me to the store room and then lock the door.

He would point to some item on the top which I would then have to climb up to. While I was trying to climb, the induna would grab me and touch every part of my body asking me to sleep with him.

I would scream until he open-

ed the door.

Another woman worker said that because she kept on resisting the induna's attempts to get her to sleep with him, he would hide her tools and then accuse her of carelessness.

He kept on threatening me with dismissal because, he said, I was refusing to give him what other women give him.

He even went as far as to make a duplicate of my clock card.

While I clocked in for the whole week, the induna would only clock in 'his' card for three days.

Destroyed clock card

He then destroyed my card and produced the duplicate so that I was underpaid.

The Kempar workers said they had begun to organise themselves into the Metal and Allied Workers Union around these issues.

The induna vowed that he was going to destroy our union. He went around forcing us to resign from MAWU.

This sparked off the strike where workers demanded the dismissal of the 'most infamous' induna.

In spite of all the evidence against the induna, the company came out in support of him and

ISITHEBE WORKERS SEXUALLY HUMILIATED

Sexual harassment is not new. What is new is that women are beginning to say 'Why should we have to put up with it'. And unions are beginning to see it as a trade union issue. Sexual harassment can take many forms from embarrassing remarks or jokes to unwanted physical contact and demands for sexual favours. It is common for the harasser to have a certain degree of authority over the 'victim' - like a manager or supervisor. Here FOSATU Worker News talks to women workers from an Isithebe factory who each tell tales of extreme harassment. However, when they all went on strike demanding the dismissal of the 'harasser' the management kept him on and fired them.

fired all the workers.

Imagine being so sexually humiliated and then you are fired for trying to defend your dignity, one of the workers said.

The workers said it was almost

impossible for them to get a job in Isithebe 'because once the company that hires you finds out that you used to work for Kempar you are immediately dismissed'.

Cooperation in Highveld Steel strike ballot

IT is rare to see co-operation between white and black workers in South Africa.

Over many years the apartheid system has driven a wedge between white workers and their black colleagues.

This division has been encouraged by employers who fear the power of united workers.

However, a strike ballot at Anglo American's Highveld Steel plant possibly points the way forward to greater worker unity.

In the ballot, a significant number of white workers joined black workers in voting yes for legal strike action.

The ballot was called by the Metal and Allied Workers Union and the SA Boilermakers Society after in-house wage talks at the company deadlocked.

Nearly all of MAWU's 2 846 voted in support of the strike, together with 410 Boilermakers' members and 401 white workers who were members of other unions.

The 401 workers, some of whom were members of the right-wing Mineworkers Union, voted in spite of instructions from their organisers not to do so.

Following the strike ballot, the company agreed to re-open wage negotiations with the two unions.

However, as we went to press no settlement had been reached.

On September 6, 3 500 black members of the two unions stopped work for three hours in protest at Highveld's refusal to improve its wage offer.

As FOSATU Worker News went to press, white members of the Boilermakers Society had not yet decided whether to join the protest action.

A MAWU spokesperson said Highveld's wage offer 'was the worst of all the house agreement offers'.

'Highveld is one of the most profitable companies in the industry, and yet it pays very badly,' he said.

Lanatex worker told to go down on her knees and beg by factory manager

THE manager forced me to go down on my knees and beg for my job back, a Lanatex shop steward told FOSATU Worker News.

Sister Albertina Madlala is one of four workers who the industrial court recently ordered the company to take back after their cases were taken up by the National Union of Textile Workers.

In an interview with FOSATU Worker News, she said that towards the end of March this Pinetown textile firm had fired three workers.

'The shop stewards approached management to find out why the three had been dismissed,' she said.

'The manager said not only were the three workers dismissed but now myself and another shop steward were dismissed.'

At this, she said, the workers had all stopped work saying that

'if the shop stewards are fired we are also not working'.

Later the management told workers that they were all dismissed and that the company would be re-employing selectively.

'The workers came back the following day to collect their pay and they were taken in one at a time, Sister Madlala said.

'They were all asked who had incited them to strike - was it the union or fellow workers,' she added.

'Then my turn came. The boss asked me who was behind the strike.'

'I told him that we were on strike in protest against the unfair dismissals,' she said.

'He asked me if I was still interested in my job. I said I was,' Sister Madlala said.

'He then said if that was the case I should go down on my

further 4c per hour increase in January. The workers started the day off by holding a meeting in a local church hall where they discussed the wage negotiations which were held at a national level and cover all of the Henred factories represented by MAWU. A male choir also sang and a Henred worker performed

a Praise Poem to the 'son of FOSATU'. The workers then moved on to a worker's house in the township where six sheep had been slaughtered and cooked. The Henred workers took advantage of the brief breaks in the rain to go outside and sing worker songs - to the delight of neighbours.

Henred workers celebrate



Kohler Plastics pays out R68 000

KOHLER Plastics has agreed to pay out R68 160 to the Metal and Allied Workers Union members who were fired after a stoppage earlier this year.

And the company has agreed to re-employ the 142 union members when vacancies come up.

The workers went on strike when the company retrenched 85 workers without any consultation with MAWU.

The retrenchments came in the middle of a dispute over the proposed introduction of a new shift system.

The Kohler workers had rejected the new shift system because the company refused to provide transport home for night workers.