

B & S to face union bashing charges



The B & S workers' committee which has played a key role in keeping all the workers united for so long.

For the past ten months they have faced tremendous hardships.

But they have refused to give up and have met every day since September last year.

Now, finally the company will have to face up to the charges the workers are bringing against it.

Papers submitted to the court by MAWU tell of the ways B&S management 'victimised' union members.

Spies

The papers say that soon after the union started recruiting in the factory, two members of the shop stewards committee were called into the managing director's office and told that he wanted to use them as spies for him.

'He told them that the identities (names) of those having any dealings with the union should be given to him and they would be kicked out of the factory.'

Fools

'The union, he continued, was no good for the workers; he did not want it in his factory; they must forget about the union, it was no good; they were fools because the union did not pay them; he wanted to use them to get rid of the rotten potatoes in his factory,' the papers say.

The papers say that management continued to 'erode the influence of the union'.

Workers were told not to join the union 'because people who joined the union would not go far with the factory'.

They were repeatedly told that the union would never work in the factory and that management was going to 'drive the union from the factory'.

One of the older workers recalls in the papers that a supervisor told him that his children would starve if he followed the union.

On September 8 1982, after dismissing the shop stewards committee, the company announced that it was paying off the entire workforce but said workers could come two days later to apply for re-employment.

Loyal

The 249 workers have resisted selective re-employment and have remained loyal to the union.

THE Metal and Allied Workers Union has asked the Industrial Court to order that B & S Steel Furniture Company take back the 249 workers they dismissed ten months ago and to pay them R850 000 in back pay.

This is the biggest back pay claim to ever come before the Industrial Court.

However, the Brits workers certainly deserve it.

Paper union strikes another blow against Typo's closed shop in secret ballot victory at Kohler Corrugated

NINETY-FOUR percent of the workers at Kohler Corrugate — a cardboard box factory in Brakpan — have rejected the TUCSA SA Typographical Union in a recent secret ballot held at the factory.

All these workers showed their overwhelming support for the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union in spite of a closed shop in the industry which forces them to belong to the TUCSA union.

The ballot strikes a further blow against SATU who recently had to give up three Nampak factories where workers also joined PWAU.

Earlier, Kohler had sneaked in a ballot at which PWAU was not present.

In this ballot workers had also overwhelmingly voted in favour of PWAU but the company had contested the results saying there was 'extreme intimidation' by the union.

Sure of its support, the union agreed that another ballot could be held at which both PWAU officials and SATU officials were present.

The results were exactly the same as the previous ballot.

Hopefully, the company can now believe that their workers want to be represented by the PWAU.

However, their still remains one stumbling block.

Kohler has to get an exemption from the Industrial Council, on which SATU sits, in order to allow workers to belong to the PWAU.

It is possible that SATU might still try to block the PWAU.

PWAU called on SATU to concede defeat and allow any worker which wishes to resign from the union to do so.

A PWAU official said the union was on the verge of winning a majority at a number of other factories covered by SATU's 'criminal' closed shop.

Highest paid in the industry

THE Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union has recently negotiated a starting rate of R81 a week for workers at Meadow Feeds in Pietermaritzburg.

This makes Meadow Feeds' workers the highest paid in the milling industry.

SFAWU organiser, Jay Naidoo said the union was fast approaching majority membership in the milling industry.

'By next year we hope to unify wages in the industry centred around FOSATU's demand for a living wage,' he said.

German worker support in Franz Falke dispute

THE German Textile Union (IG Textil-Bekleidung), which has over a quarter of a million members, has agreed to support the National Union of Textile Workers in its dispute with Franz Falke Textiles.

This follows a recent meeting in Dusseldorf between the general secretary of FOSATU, Joe Foster, and the international secretary of the German union.

Franz Falke Textiles has a factory in Bellville in the Western Cape but its head office is in Germany where it has five factories.

Force

Although, the majority of the workers at the factory joined the NUTW last year, the company has gone out of its way to force workers to form a works committee.

In a report given to Textil-Bekleidung, NUTW said that only five days before they were supposed to have had a meeting with the company in April management held a referendum to find out whether workers wanted a works committee.

Undermine

'The workers refused to take part in this and the majority of them placed blank pages back into the ballot box.

'Workers told the union that they regarded this as an attempt by management to undermine their decision to become unionised,' the report said.

But management did not stop at this.

Workers said that in meetings at the factory, management had said that the company would only give increases in wages and improve working conditions through the works committee and not through the union.

The management then called workers in one by one into the office and pressurised them to

Workers demand a share of 'the rain' which falls at Suncrush even during the drought

SHOP stewards at Suncrush, a Richards Bay cool-drink factory, recently had a novel answer to their bosses' excuse that they could not pay wage increases because of the drought.

They replied that it was raining in the factory.

And then went out to prove it in order to support their drive for higher wage increases.

The shop stewards' investigation revealed that during the night shift more than 15000 crates of litre bottles of cool-drink were loaded — these were sold at R4.56 a crate.

It seems that even in a drought people were thirsty, shop stewards said.

As a result of their arguments, management agreed to pay the

resign from the union.

The international secretary of the German textile union at the meeting in Dusseldorf agreed to take up the matter with the German head office of Franz Falke.

In the meantime, the NUTW is taking legal action against the Bellville company.

workers an average increase of 18 percent — this will mean that workers on the lowest grade will get a R10 increase on their weekly wage.

At the beginning of wage talks management had only been prepared to offer a 10 percent increase on the lowest grades.

Brother Tom Mkhwanazi, Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union organiser for the Northern Natal region, said although workers had accepted the increase, they were not entirely happy with it.

'They will continue to push for a R2 an hour minimum when they meet with the company in December,' he added.