

KDC's minimum doubled

DUE to the campaigning of Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union members, the KwaZulu Development Corporation has nearly doubled the minimum wage of all its workers.

In October 1983 the workers at Imbali Brewery demanded that the poverty minimum wage of R120 a month be raised to at least R300.

Like many other KwaZulu Development Corporation companies Imbali management hid behind their 'homeland' status.

They said that increases would be decided in Ulundi in March and that there was no money to give such increases.

In March a new minimum wage of R180 was announced for all those working for the KwaZulu Development Corporation (KDC).

Imbali workers rejected this and continued to demand R300.

The company offered another R10,90 but this was also rejected.

In April this year, SFAWU declared a dispute and applied for a Conciliation Board.

The Board was appointed but the KDC refused to accept it.

In order to prevent further delays, the union agreed to submit the wage dispute to mediation.

The KDC finally agreed to raise the minimum wage another R40 to R230 per month for all its employees - this is nearly double the R120 minimum which began the Imbali workers' campaign.

UNION organisation at Brits in the Transvaal is growing stronger day by day.

And workers have begun to use this strength to win real gains.

Many companies were originally attracted to Brits by the high unemployment that existed around this 'border' area and by the low wages which this allowed them to pay.

The car company, Alfa Romeo was no exception.

Before the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union began organising in the plant last year, Alfa was the lowest paying company in the industry.

Now all that has changed. After long and tough negotiations, minimum wages have been pushed up to R2,40 an hour from July.

These wage levels are equal to Sigma and Datsun but are still below those paid in the Eastern Cape and at Toyota.

However, the new wages were not gained without a struggle.

Negotiations began on June 28 when an argument immediately broke out over NAAWU's demand to negotiate both wages and working conditions at the same time.

Eventually, the company made a wage offer and working conditions were left over for later negotiations.

The first offer made by the company, 10c an hour, was completely unacceptable to the union negotiating team. So also was the new offer of 11 cents.

The union refused to recommend it to the workers and at a mass meeting of 700 the workers also rejected it.

At this meeting workers decided to down tools on Monday July 9.

On that morning, workers gathered at the factory canteen,

Jubilant Alfa workers return victorious



Jubilant Alfa workers stream back to work after their successful wage strike

singing freedom songs, and then marched on the administration block.

Shop stewards were mandated to approach the company again.

This time Alfa increased its offer to 13 cents.

The new offer was reported back to the workers at the administration block who loudly rejected it.

Another meeting was held the

next day at which a new offer was made - 16 cents from July 1 and another 3 cents in October. This was finally increased by one cent.

The workers then returned to work in high spirits, singing songs.

Much of the trouble at Alfa, union sources said, could have been avoided.

They said that Alfa's manage-

ment helped provoke the conflict by their 'paternalistic' attitude and their 'unprofessional' approach to negotiations.

It also seems that Alfa underestimated the unity and determination of the workers union sources said.

'The question now on the workers' lips is, will they be foolish enough to do this again?' a NAAWU spokesperson said.

Jaguar workers stage mass walk-out

ABOUT 200 Jaguar shoe workers recently staged a mass walk-out of a meeting called by the TUCSA affiliated National Union of Leatherworkers.

The workers from this Pietermaritzburg factory have recently organised themselves into the National Union of Textile Workers in defiance of the industry's closed shop.

In terms of the closed shop all the workers have to be members of TUCSA's NUL.

Back in 1978, the Jaguar workers were in the forefront of the resistance to TUCSA and started the Footwear and Tanning Workers' Union.

However, when this union collapsed they were forced to

remain members of the TUCSA union.

But once again the Jaguar workers have taken up the struggle against TUCSA - this time as members of NUTW.

NUTW organiser, Prof Sineke said the TUCSA union had organised a meeting for the Jaguar workers when it heard how they were crossing the floor to NUTW.

He said after discussions with the workers it was decided that he should go with them to the meeting.

'An NUL organiser said at the beginning of the meeting that it had just been called for Jaguar workers and those who

did not work at the factory should leave.'

'Well, I stood up and asked whether I could stay at the meeting but was told that I had to go.'

'But when all the workers said that they would leave as well, the NUL organisers backed down and said I could stay,' Prof Sineke said.

Shortly after this Brother Sineke asked if he could have permission to speak.

'There was a lot of clapping and excitement when I stood up and explained I was from FOSATU and that we fight for workers' rights,' he said.

'Then I left and everybody

followed me - they were wearing NUTW shirts and singing FOSATU songs,' he added.

Brother Sineke said the workers had then gone to the union offices and had held their own meeting there.

Later in the week, NUTW began negotiations with Jaguar management who had heard about the walkout at the NUL meeting.

Prof Sineke said the company had agreed to give the union stop orders and access and had agreed to discussions on the issue of shop stewards.

He said the union would now be pushing for exemption for Jaguar workers from NUL's closed shop.

Garment union backs down on its threat to fire NUTW members

THE TUCSA affiliated Garment Workers Industrial Union has backed down on its earlier threat to have workers fired for belonging to the National Union of Textile Workers.

In the industrial court, lawyers acting for the TUCSA union admitted that the threats would be seen as an unfair labour practice.

This is the latest news in the battle being waged by clothing workers for the right to belong to NUTW.

Because of a closed shop covering the clothing industry these workers are forced to be members of the Garment Workers Industrial Union or lose their jobs.

Recently, workers at James North at Pinetown in open rejection of the closed shop, voted

overwhelmingly in favour of NUTW.

The TUCSA union immediately amended its constitution to allow it to expel these workers and in turn force the company to fire them.

The GWIU ordered the workers to appear before an enquiry in order to find out whether they were members of NUTW.

'However, it appears as if GWIU's whole strategy of intimidation is being abandoned,' NUTW general secretary, John Copelyn said.

'But it remains to be seen whether it will exempt these workers from their duty to remain GWIU members,' he said.

Meanwhile in another case concerning a clothing worker,

at Natal Overall an active union member was transferred to a different job which involved cleaning toilets and scrubbing floors.

She was then fired by the company when she refused to accept the change of job.

The NUTW has charged that the change of work was done deliberately to humiliate her because she was an active union member.

The union launched an unfair labour practice claim for her in the industrial court.

In court, the company's sole opposition to the claim was that it had not been referred properly to the industrial council.

However, NUTW pointed out that the worker had refused to

submit herself to an interview by council inspectors because they would not allow her any legal representation.

The union charged that the council had showed no interest in settling the dispute.

And in fact the council had handled it in such a manner as to prejudice her case merely because she was a member of a rival union, the union said.

The industrial council on which the TUCSA union sits argued that the worker's claim should be dismissed.

NUTW's John Copelyn said ironically, the Natal Overall worker was still forced to be a member of GWIU.

'But the union made no attempt to help its own member,' he said.

Closed shop victory

AN attempt to block furniture workers from joining the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union has failed.

An ex TUCSA union, the National Union of Furniture and Allied Workers applied to the Supreme Court for an order barring PWAU from recruiting furniture workers.

The furniture union argued that because it has a closed shop, workers would be endangering their right to employment in the industry if they joined another union.

The closed shop insists that all furniture workers belong to NUFW.

The union also argued that PWAU's constitution did not cover furniture workers.

The court action was launched after workers from Brits factory, Pat Cornick, joined PWAU in March this year.

When PWAU approached the Pat Cornick management, the company was reminded by NUFW that it was breaching the closed shop agreement.

As a direct result 57 active union members were fired by Pat Cornick.

NUFAW obviously intended to stop PWAU from organising anywhere in the furniture industry.

However, on the day of the court hearing PWAU's constitution had been amended to cover furniture workers and so NUFW's application was turned down.

The court ordered that NUFW should pay all the legal costs.