

CWIU climbs back at Sasol

Secunda stewards acquitted

IN February this year an armed man was discovered by workers in a general meeting at Secunda.

Workers were furious and attacked him. During the attack he pulled out his loaded gun and aimed at shop stewards. The workers disarmed him and marched him to the platform.

He then revealed himself as a policeman but could produce no identification.

Workers refused to believe he was a policeman and demanded he be taken to the police station and that a charge be laid against him.

On arrival at the police station, stewards and organisers were shouted at by policemen who accused them of stealing the gun.

The police refused to listen to the complaint and arrested a shop steward. A second shop steward was arrested two days later.

The shop stewards were charged with robbery and assault. Later the robbery charge was dropped.

The Chemical Workers Industrial Union felt that the case must be strongly defended. Police and informers must be taught that they have no right to attend union meetings, the union said.

After several court appearances in Evander, the shop stewards were acquitted on all charges.

Three-month legal strike

ABOUT 125 Metal and Allied Workers Union members at Pinetown factory, Natal Die Casting, have been out on a legal strike for over three months.

A union organiser said that for over two years the union has been struggling to get the company to seriously negotiate wages with it.

Things came to a head at the end of the latest round of negotiations when Natal Die Castings was only prepared to offer R29.

After the workers had been on strike for a few days, Natal Die Casting sacked them all.

When one of the workers went back to the factory to see what was happening, one of the directors said he would employ him if he resigned from the union.

Some of the strikers have reported that the company called in the SAP's Security Branch to assist them with their strike problems. The police even went to the union offices to find an organiser and while there arrested one of the workers.

Natal Die Casting has told the union that there are no more vacancies at the factory and that it is not interested in talking to MAWU anymore. It has hired scabs to replace the strikers.

The strikers have been meeting in the union offices every week to discuss the situation and to keep united.

MAWU has declared a dispute with the company and will be taking court action against it for its unfair actions. The union has also raised money to help support the strikers and has handed out food parcels.

ry, your contract will not be renewed. There was no hearing and no appeal,' she added.

After talks with the union, management agreed to discontinue this practice.

'All dismissals must now follow the procedure, which includes a system of warnings and a formal inquiry where shaft stewards will be present to represent workers,' she said.

First time

Commenting on the wages, the union spokesperson said that up to now Sasol had always paid the extremely low wage rates laid down by the Chamber of Mines.

'But this year, for the first time, Sasol has paid increases above those given by the Chamber.'

In terms of a wage agreement negotiated with the CWIU, workers on the lowest grade received an increase of 25 percent from July 1 — the overall increase was 22 percent.

'The wages of the Sasol workers, and in particular the the mine workers, do not yet approach a living wage,' the union spokesperson said.

'However, these gains are a significant step forward. Sasol workers will go forward to the 1986 negotiations with renewed determination to fight for a living wage for all,' she concluded.



Flashback: One of the many Sasol workers waiting to be bused back to the homelands last November

gap between the lower paid and the more highly paid workers.

'It was the workers earning only R300 per month that were suffering the most,' the spokesperson explained.

The company finally agreed to pay workers on the bottom four grades an increase of R75 per month from July 1 — the next three grades received a slightly higher cash increase.

This represented a 25 percent increase for the lowest paid, and an overall increase of 19,3 percent.

Meanwhile, on the mines, where the CWIU has over 5 000 members, things are real-

ly moving.

An agreement on shaft steward rights has been completed and elections are due to take place soon.

And already the union has begun to take up the 'appalling' wages and working conditions which exist on the mines.

'Recently, it came to light that a system of hidden dismissals was being practised on the mines.'

'Although, there is a disciplinary procedure, management was getting round this,' the CWIU spokesperson said.

leave and renew the contract they were often told, sor-

EVER since the agreement with Sasol in March this year, the Chemical Workers Industrial Union has been working hard to rebuild and strengthen organisation at the Sasol plants and Sasol mines.

In under four-months, the union has climbed back up to a paid-up majority in the plants. And as an added bonus, it now has a significant majority at the Sasol mines.

This is a tremendous achievement for the CWIU which during the November stay-away last year watched Sasol fire 6 000 workers and bus them back to the homelands.

In the March settlement, the company agreed to take back seventy percent of these workers. It also agreed to formally recognise union shop stewards.

The CWIU reports that at the Sasol II & III plants the team of shop stewards have been using their extra rights to fight and win many issues.

Wages was one of the issues recently discussed with Sasol management.

'Sasol makes vast profits but its wage levels are very low. We want a living wage for all workers,' a union spokesperson said.

In the wage talks, CWIU argued that management should not give a percentage increase as this would only widen the



MAWU members at the unions' Annual General Meeting — at this meeting they rejected Seifsa's wage offer

Metal workers dissatisfied with industrial council wage increases

DISATISFACTION with this year's industrial council wage agreement has already led to strikes at two Transvaal companies and another one could be on the way as metal workers attempt to win a better wage increase at plant-level.

This follows the Metal and Allied Workers Union's refusal to sign the metal industry's industrial council agreement for the third year in a row.

The union has argued that it would not do so until the employers agreed to pay a living wage.

At the June 26 industrial council meeting, the metal employers' association, Seifsa made its final offer of a 14c to 24c an hour increase. This has been accepted by all the metal unions except MAWU.

The first factory to take strike action in support of their wage demand was Silverton

Engineering, a Pretoria radiator factory organised by the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union.

After six days the 400-odd Silverton workers went back when the company agreed to pay them an immediate 15c increase and a further 5c increase in October and December.

The Siemens' workers, however, were not so lucky.

About 1 250 workers from five Siemens factories went on strike when the company and the Metal and Allied Workers Union deadlocked over the workers' demand for a R1 an hour increase.

Union sources said that during the strike negotiations, the company initially argued that across-the-board increases could only be discussed at the industrial council but that it was prepared to give merit increases, however these were

non-negotiable.

Another issue which was a matter of contention during the talks was whether Siemens would take back all the strikers. The company said it would not take back 40 of the strikers who it claims were involved in violence.

After many rounds of talks, Siemens eventually agreed to negotiate the merit increases and that the 40 workers would only be suspended pending a joint union/company inquiry.

The strikers returned to work on July 29. However, according to union sources, the company is now refusing to hold a joint inquiry and instead is demanding that the cases of the 40 suspended workers be referred immediately to mediation.

Meanwhile, at the four Transvaal Dorbyl factories a date has been set for the ballot

to determine whether workers are prepared to take strike action over the issues of wages. It will be held on August 12.

The workers are demanding a R3,50 per hour minimum and a 50c across-the-board-increase, but much like Siemens, Dorbyl is arguing that it cannot negotiate wages and conditions of service at plant-level.

Union sources report that Dorbyl has banned all general meetings inside the factories and that it dismissed four shop stewards for holding a general meeting inside the plant in spite of the fact that it was held in the workers own time.

MAWU has accused the company of trying to 'cripple' the union before the strike ballot is held.

It has also said it would be taking legal action against the company unless it reinstates the shop stewards.