

Workers Win R38 000 In Court Victory

FIFTY-ONE workers at Stobar at Olifantsfontein through their solidarity have won a major victory in the Industrial Court which will prevent employers from unjustly firing workers.

The Stobar workers were all dismissed last year after management claimed they had been participating in a 'go-slow'. The workers denied this so their union, the Metal and Allied Workers Union, decided to take the company to the Industrial Court for unfairly dismissing their members.

The Industrial Court recently ordered the company to take back the workers and, on top of this, ordered them to pay them R38 000 in back pay for the time they had been out of work.

The Industrial Court, which was formed specially to listen to disputes in the field of labour, has up to now tended to favour management in its decisions. Perhaps it is now beginning to appreciate the oppressed position of workers in this country.

The trouble at Stobar began in August last year when management decided that the answer to the drop in orders they were experiencing was to lay off some workers.

The shop stewards initially managed to persuade management to introduce short time before retrenchment but at a later stage the company went ahead and retrenched six workers without any consultation with the shop stewards.

The shop stewards told the retrenched workers to return to work and they would take up their case for them.

However, before the issue could be discussed, management dismissed the entire workforce for participating in a 'go-slow'.

The workers told the court that they thought management had

dreamed up the idea of a go-slow in order to enable them to retrench workers without consulting with the representative union.

A MAWU organiser said the victory was a result of the solidarity of the Stobar workers. For about six months they held meetings twice a week, he said.

A MAWU spokesman said

workers must learn to consider brothers and sisters in other factories. After all the victory achieved by the Stobar workers will benefit all FOSATU members, he said.

Management will have to think twice before arbitrarily firing workers without giving them a chance to argue their case, he added.



Stobar shop stewards celebrate their victory with organisers at FOSATU's Kempton Park office.

JOINT SHOP STEWARDS COURSES

AN important move has been made in the Transvaal by the Regional Education Committee.

The Transvaal saw a large increase in membership in 1982 with recognition being gained in many factories.

Shop stewards were asking for training courses to be run as they felt they needed to learn to operate independently and effectively in the factories. There are presently 60 FOSATU shop steward groups awaiting training in the Transvaal.

As a result of this demand, the Regional Education Committee is preparing to hold joint shop stewards training courses. Shop stewards from all FOSATU unions will attend the courses and organisers from all the unions will take part in the teaching.

The two courses will be run in the last two weeks of each month for a period of three days each. The initial courses will cover issues such as grievance handling, preparing for a meeting with management, union structures and union democracy.

A large number of organisers and shop stewards will take part so the committee hopes to develop effective courses and course material which can be of use to all FOSATU unions.

Worldwide Support For Shoe Workers

THE plight of workers at the KwaZulu Shoe Company at Loskop in Natal has roused the anger of unions worldwide.

The Loskop factory is part of the giant shoe multinational, Bata, based in Canada which employs more than 85 000 workers in 100 factories all over the world.

Workers at the KwaZulu Shoe Company raised many serious grievances last year but the company refused to discuss any of these with the

National Union of Textile Workers and in fact refused to have anything to do with the union.

In the face of this situation, NUTW raised the plight of the Loskop workers both with the International Textile Garment and Leather Workers Federation and with the Canadian Labour Congress.

PLEDGE

Since then the NUTW has received pledges of support from

unions from all over the world and many have written to Mr TJ Bata - head of the Bata company - calling on him to 'eradicate' the mistreatment of the KwaZulu workers.

RAISE

The Canadian Labour Congress raised the Loskop issue with the Canadian Government and the International Secretary of the Congress strongly criticised the company in an interview on the Canadian Radio.

New Links With International Labour

JOHN Copelyn, the acting general secretary of the National Union of Textile Workers, has been appointed to the Executive Committee of the International Textile Garment and Leather Workers Federation.

The ITGLWF represents 5 million workers worldwide in the textile, garment, footwear and allied industries. Over 146 unions from 68 countries are affiliated to the international.

LINK

Brother Copelyn's appointment marks a further step in the establishment of links between FOSATU affiliates and the international labour movement.

He joins Fred Sauls, the general secretary of the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union, who is on the Executive of the International Metalworkers' Federation and FOSATU's president, Chris Dlamini who sits on the Africa Executive of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Associations.

Since establishing links with the ITGLWF, the NUTW has been reporting to the international its battles with multinationals. Two years ago ITGLWF's general secretary, Charles Ford, came to South Africa to give evidence in support of the NUTW's case against SA Fabrics and more recently he has been drumming up support for the union in its dispute with the KwaZulu Shoe Company.

PRESERVE

It is not surprising, therefore, that Brother Copelyn should be appointed to the Executive which had previously been the preserve of TUCSA unions.



John Copelyn

NEWS IN BRIEF

THE National Automobile and Allied Workers Union has won a new R2 an hour minimum wage rate at Leyland's Cape Town plant.

Senior shop steward and FOSATU treasurer, Nathaniel Gantana said 'We are by no means satisfied with the wages but the situation of the economy is making things difficult.'

For the first time the wage agreement was separated from the recognition agreement. The reason for this, Brother Gantana said, was so that if there was a dispute over wages this would not jeopardise the union's recognition by the company.

UNIPLY

PAPER Wood and Allied Workers Union has signed its first recognition agreement with a Factory in Southern Natal.

The agreement with Uniply at Cato Ridge follows a strike last June when the entire workforce downed tools in support of a dismissed colleague. The newly elected shop stewards committee negotiated his reinstatement and the union began negotiations towards an agreement.

PWAWU has two established branches in the Transvaal and Northern Natal and is working towards establishing branches in the Eastern Cape and in Southern Natal.

KELLOGGS

SINCE the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union was recognised at Kelloggs in Springs in 1979 the union has won massive wage increases for its members - in 1980 the lowest grade was only R38 a week whereas according to the latest wage agreement the same workers will be paid R90 a week.

And more important in terms of the new wage agreement workers have reached the R2 an hour

minimum.

This makes Kelloggs the only food company to pay workers the R2 minimum, Brother Chris Dlamini, vice chairman of the shop stewards committee and FOSATU president said.

MONDI

ANGLO American subsidiary, Mondri, has been forced to back down on its decision to not negotiate with the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union at factory level.

Late last year Mondri management at the company's Felixton Mill informed PWAWU that union officials could no longer be present at meetings between management and shop stewards.

However, when workers barred their shop stewards from meeting with management on these terms, Mondri backed down and negotiations have begun towards union recognition.

HENKEL

HENKEL workers long and bitter struggle for union recognition and wage negotiations reached an important landmark in January when the Chemical Workers Industrial Union negotiated a 22 percent wage increase and an improved annual bonus.

During the negotiations the canteen was boycotted on several occasions. As one worker put it 'How can we eat the company food when our children are going to stay hungry.'

CWIU Branch Secretary, Rod Crompton said 'Henkel wages are still lagging behind other major detergent producers but we believe this agreement is a start.'