

Bakers strike ends in victory

ONE thousand workers in Bakers' Isando and Pinetown factories ended their two week legal strike with a taste of victory.

After four month's of wage negotiations, the management finally budged from their final offer of 12,5 percent and on Friday February 22, workers settled on a minimum wage of R96 per week — a 16,5 percent increase.

The wage negotiations follow the collapse last year of the biscuit industrial council covering the Transvaal and Natal when two major employers, Bakers and Fedbisco, withdrew to negotiate with the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union.

A new bargaining forum was set up and the minority unions, consisting of Norman Daniels' TUCSA union and CUSA's food union, were invited to present a united front with SFAWU against the biscuit bosses.

After only two meetings the other unions were ready to settle on 12,5 percent.

But SFAWU members decided to continue pushing for a living wage. They argued that 12,5 percent was even lower than the current rate of inflation.

At the Cape industrial council, Daniels' union settled on a 10 and 12,5 percent increase for workers in the Bakers-owned Baumanns and Pyotts factories, making it even difficult for SFAWU members to win some-

thing better.

Still, SFAWU members decided to push on and declare a dispute. And when more than 30 days passed without any settlement, they went out on a le-

gal strike 'to make the bosses listen'.

Bakers shop steward chairperson, Tom Dlamini, explained how hard the strike was: 'Bakers' management was

not moving, though they agreed that it was our right to strike.

'They wanted to see how long we could survive and keep united. But we were determined to win.'

He said the union had tried to involve the workers' families in the struggle and had called them to a big meeting where food was distributed.

'But the day after our mass meeting in Durban the bosses reacted by locking us out and giving an ultimatum saying that the final offer of 12,5 percent would be withdrawn if we did not return to work,' he added.

But the strike continued and after almost 24 hours of negotiations a settlement was reached.

Brother Dlamini said the struggle was important as South African employers should learn that workers would demand a living wage even during a recession.

'We will not carry the load of the bosses' and the government's bad planning.'

'Also, more than 200 Indian workers supported the strike, showing that real worker unity is possible,' he said.



Bakers' workers on their way to a strike meeting

Transport workers flock in

GOODS transport workers are flocking to the Transport and General Workers Union and in the past four months the union has won a majority at eight new Transvaal companies.

This breakthrough has been achieved in the face of tremendous hostility from the trucking bosses who seemed determined to keep TGWU out of their industry.

They were assisted in their blocking tactics by TUCSA's

African Transport Workers Union.

However, workers remained solidly behind the TGWU and continued to push for recognition.

Eventually, Cargo Carriers, the largest goods transport firm in the country, began discussions with TGWU. And now recognition talks are now on the go with four more transport companies.

The union is also expanding in the motor ferry sector of the transport industry.

Motorvia's Transvaal depot 9Acently recognised TGWU. It joins the company's Uitenage and Durban operations which recognised the union some time ago.

And at Southern Star, where the union was forced to declare a dispute because of management resistance, recognition talks are now underway.

Food workers issue call for unity

IN building a workers' movement in South Africa, unity is essential, Chris Dlamini, the president of both FOSATU and Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union, told a crowded annual general meeting on February 9.

Speaking to over 1 000 workers at the SFAWU AGM held at Kwathema near Springs, Brother Dlamini said: 'It is also

important that workers use the structures of the union to ensure workers' control.'

Food and Canning Workers Union president, Alfred Noko, also stressed the need for unity when he spoke.

The workers at the meeting went on to pledge their support for the building of one union in the food industry.

Factory wage talks in paper industry

FOR the first time in the history of the pulp and paper industrial council, employers have agreed to refer the wage negotiations back to factory-level in an attempt to break their deadlock with the unions.

It is ironic that the suggestion of plant-level talks was made during the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union's first negotiations at the council, because for years the employers have resisted discussing wages at the factories and have instead insisted that PWAWU join the council.

When all the factory-level negotiations have finished, the industrial council will once again meet and the lowest minimum wage accepted in the factories will become the legal

minimum for the entire industry. The increases will be back-paid to January 1.

So far, though, the plant-level talks have not all been smooth sailing. And for the first time, the paper industry is without a council agreement as the present agreement expired on January 1.

Up to now, PWAWU has settled with Mondi, Nampak and Carlton on a 20-25c per hour increase for January with an agreement that there will be a further increase in July which management has agreed will not be less than 5c per hour.

But, predictably, the union has been forced to declare a dispute with the giant Sappi company which initially, at wage talks at Port Elizabeth's

Adamas mill, offered a wage increase less than their offer at the council.

In Sappi's Tugela mill, where the company still wishes to deduct the increase that it gave in September from the present increase, the other unions sitting on the council have joined PWAWU in the dispute.

PWAWU members have also resisted some employer's efforts to pay interim increases. At Mondi's Felixton and Umgeni mills, workers stopped work when management pinned up a notice saying they intended paying interim increases.

Workers have said that they would rather wait for the right increases than undermine their bargaining position by accepting interim increases.

At those factories where settlement has been reached, the new minimum wage for January now ranges between R2 and R2,36 per hour.

Sappi's offers up to now do not bring their wages anywhere near the R2 mark. And yet it makes 40 percent of all the paper that is made in South Africa!

'It is ridiculous to hear the way that such a big and fast expanding company is pleading poverty,' a PWAWU organiser said.

'Also, the fight over the other demands has not really even started. These will have to be settled before PWAWU will agree to sign an agreement,' the organiser added.

New maternity benefits at Henkel

WOMEN workers at Henkel at Prospecton will be paid as much as 78 percent of their wages during maternity leave as a result of a new agreement negotiated by the Chemical Workers Industrial Union.

In addition to the 45 percent claimed from UIF, the company has agreed to pay women workers 20 percent of their wages if they have less than three years' service and 33 percent to those with longer service. Henkel has said it would assist workers in claiming UIF benefits.

The new agreement gives workers a total of three month's maternity leave.

Demands for metal wage talks

IT'S that time of the year again! *he yearly tussle at the giant metal industry's industrial council is due to begin.

And for the first time all the unions affiliated to the International Metalworkers Federation, which includes the Metal and Allied Workers Union, have agreed to send a joint proposal to the industrial council.

The joint proposal was drawn up at a meeting of the IMF's South African Council on March 8. The main demands

are:

● A minimum wage of R3,50 per hour rising to a R6,53 minimum for artisans — with a guaranteed across-the-board increase of 50c.

● The reduction of working hours to 40 hours per week with no loss of pay.

● Four weeks paid leave for all workers with an additional one week's leave after four year's service and an additional two week's leave after eight year's service.

● A restriction of overtime and overtime to be paid at double time during the week and treble time over the weekend and holidays.

● May Day as a paid public holiday.

● The employer's contribution to the pension fund to be increased to 12 percent and this money to be invested in family housing.

● Severance pay to be one month's wages per year of service.

Everything set for new federation

IT looks like everything is set for the formation of the new super federation later this year.

The drafting committee, which was set up last year to draw up the constitution for the new federation, has completed its work.

Copies of the constitution have been sent to all the

unions, which have committed themselves to the new federation, for their final comments.

Then in June, the National Executive Committees of the unions will all meet to discuss arrangements for the launching congress of the new federation which is likely to be held in October.