

Motor merger slammed

THE Ford closure in Port Elizabeth clearly reveals that multinationals have absolutely no interest in the welfare of workers and their communities in the countries where they operate.

This was said by the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union in a scathing attack on Ford for its decision to close down the Ford Neave Plant and the Amcar Truck Plant which is likely to affect about 2 000 workers.

The plant closures which are to take place over the next eighteen months is a result of the merger of Ford and Amcar to form Samcor (South African Motor Corporation).

'It is clear that this action by Ford is not in the interest of the workers but is merely another attack on them,' the union said.

The communities of Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage were already 'reeling' under the effects of high unemployment and the serious recession, it added.

NAAWU said that Ford already had a notorious record for plant closures worldwide.

'In Europe workers are fighting against such closures and have demanded that all matters affecting their lives should be negotiated and decided with them.'

'Not as Ford has done in Port Elizabeth, where it just decided without any consultation to

close the Neave plant and then it told the workers that it was being done in their interest,' the union added.

'The company has deliberately denied us the right to have a say or express our views on our future and that of our children. We are nothing to Ford. Their machines are more precious to them than we who are flesh and blood and living beings,' said Freddie Mosquin, a worker with 28 year's service at Ford.

In its proposals to the company, NAAWU has demanded that workers affected by the rationalisation of production 'be assured of placement' in other positions within the Ford/Anglo American Companies with assistance for re-location if transferred to another area.

The union has demanded that the period for the phasing out of production at the Neave Plant be 'extended to overlap with the upswing in the economy'.

It has asked that all workers aged 50 and over with 20 year's service be retired with normal pension benefits.

And finally, the union has demanded that Ford workers be offered the chance to leave 'voluntarily' with two month's wages for each completed year of service, refund of own as well as employer's pension fund contributions, full service leave pay and assistance for retraining.

International pressure is a challenge to apartheid, says union vice-president



NAAWU vice-president, John Gomomo

NATIONAL Automobile and Allied Workers Union vice-president, John Gomomo, during a recent visit to the United States urged Americans to continue to demonstrate against the racist policies of the South African government.

Speaking at a church service in Detroit, which is the heart of the American car industry, Brother Gomomo said that international pressure was a means of challenging apartheid's racism.

Referring to the American anti-apartheid demonstrations, Brother Gomomo said: 'Black and white Americans should continue what they are doing'.

He said that the anti-apartheid demonstrations had heartened apartheid opponents in South Africa and also surprised them, because they had thought that the American protest movement had died or grown impotent.

He added that these demonstrations had begun to pay dividends by focusing the spotlight on the South African government, forcing it to explain its indefensible policies to the world.

'The goal of my union and other opponents of apartheid is an end to all apartheid laws and the establishment of a constitution that protects people irrespective of sex, colour or creed,' Brother Gomomo said.

Brother Gomomo went to the United States to meet with leaders and shop stewards of the United Auto Workers.

During his visit, Brother Gomomo joined American demonstrators outside the South African embassy.

LP shows its true colours

The Labour Party has once again shown its true colours by accusing worker leaders of inciting the student boycott in the Uitenhage area.

In fact the boycott was directly the result of the Labour Party's efforts to set up an opposition sports body to the non-racial Uitenhage Sports Board.

The Uitenhage Sports Board has 18 affiliated sport organisations and for the past 23-years has been agitating for better sports facilities for the Uitenhage communities.

However, on January 21, the Labour Party controlled, CMC, called a meeting in order to set up a rival sports body. The

meeting was attended by three high school principals.

This sparked off a boycott at John Walton and Uitenhage high schools which has since spread to the rest of the Uitenhage high schools and to a number of Port Elizabeth schools.

The students are demanding that their schools commit themselves in writing to the non-racial policies of the South African Council of Sports (SACOS).

Since the beginning of the boycott the students have been continually harassed by the Security Branch to such an extent that many have been forced to

stay away from home. A number of the students have also been detained.

And on February 18, the police brutally attacked protesting students outside Uitenhage high school. Twenty-one received medical treatment, a number of whom will bear permanent scars.

The Labour Party's response to the boycott has been to close Uitenhage and John Walton high schools 'indefinitely' and to transfer three teachers, two of whom are Uitenhage Sports Board leaders, to schools in Walvis Bay.

In press statements, Labour

Party leader, Rev Allan Hendrickse, has said that the school unrest was an 'orchestrated' campaign against his party by SACOS.

He has also accused National Automobile and Allied Workers Union office bearers of being behind the unrest.

This is not the first time that the Labour Party has attacked FOSATU unions. In the past, Hendrickse has criticised NAAWU's 'living wage campaign' and the union's involvement in the 1982 motor strikes.

Meanwhile, ten worker committees from FOSATU factories in Uitenhage and seven committees from Port Elizabeth

factories have called on 'the police and politicians' to leave educational matters in the hands of the teachers, students and parents 'who are fully capable of handling the situation'.

The committees condemned the planned transfer of the three teachers and warned that this 'punitive action' would be strongly opposed by FOSATU.

They have also called for the opening of the two high schools, for the unconditional readmission of all students, for the removal of the two high principals, and for the setting up of democratically elected Student Representative Committees.

Renault steward released after four-month detention

RENAULT shop steward, Jerry Kau, was released on February 13 after four months in detention under South Africa's security legislation.

Brother Kau, who is an executive council member of the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union, was arrested by police at his factory on October 4 last year.

He has not been charged but has been warned that he may be needed as a witness in a future, unspecified trial.

Brother Kau's detention sparked off a major campaign for his release which included a demonstration stoppage at a Johannesburg factory where some of his union comrades worked.

The International Metalworkers Federation and the CFDT, a French union confederation which has members at Renault, also campaigned for his release.

In a press release, NAAWU

general secretary, Fred Sauls said that Brother Kau's sudden release without being charged 'merely confirms the arbitrary, unjust and totalitarian nature of security legislation'.

'NAAWU once more calls for the release of all those detained under such legislation and for the repeal of laws which are often used in attempts to intimidate trade unions and their representatives,' Brother Sauls said.

Toyota agreement

BY July workers at Toyota will have the highest minimum wage of all the country's motor assembly plants as a result of recent wage talks between the company and the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union.

The wage agreement initially raised the minimum wage from R2,65 to R2,83 per hour.

But workers will get at least another 17c across-the-board increase in July which will bring the minimum wage up to R3 per hour —which is close to NAAWU's living wage demand

of R3,50.

These wage talks were the union's first since it signed an interim recognition agreement with Toyota in June last year.

The recognition agreement, as well as giving the usual stop order and access rights, also laid down retrenchment benefits of five day's wages for each completed year of service and increased the annual leave from 12 to 15 days.

The union also negotiated a service attendance allowance which ranges from 2c to 4c per hour depending on length of service.