

THE GST SQUEEZE

THE government has administered another blow to workers and their families by increasing the GST by another 1 percent.

This was said by the Metal and Allied Workers Union in a statement released after its recent National Executive Committee meeting.

The union said that families living on or below the bread line, 'just can't afford it'.

'There are so many other ways for the government to collect the money it needs from the people who can afford it,' the union said.

'But workers are not represented on the committees that recommend changes in taxes and those who can afford to pay are represented both directly and indirectly,' MAWU added.

It said despite the recession, most of the major companies in South Africa had reported tremendous profits for 1983.

'On the other hand, workers have suffered more and more — their real standard of living has dropped more and more as inflation, unemployment, loss of land and cattle have forced workers to spread their money more thinly,' the union said.

As a result MAWU's NEC said it would encourage union members to put as the first part of any wage demand to employers the 1 percent to make up for the GST increase.

'If workers have no voice in government, they must speak where they do have a voice — at work,' MAWU said.



Rubber workers strike for wages



ABOUT 300 workers at Isipingo's Wayne Rubber Company recently went on strike in support of a demand for higher wages. During the three day strike, the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union signed up the majority of the workers at the plant — talks are underway for union recognition after which the union will tackle wages.

Education Bursaries

FOR the first time, the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union has awarded education bursaries to 19 Port Elizabeth students.

Last year the union announced that it would be examining the possibility of setting up an education fund to assist workers' children to get an education.

Regional secretary of the Eastern Province, Les Kettleidas said at this stage R10 000 had been set aside to assist standard nine and ten pupils.

'The bursaries, which are for a maximum of R500, will go towards school fees, books and in some cases will cover transport and board and lodging,' Brother Kettleidas said.

He said the union would be looking into the possibility of extending the education fund to include technical or university education.

Speaking at the function at

which the bursaries were handed out, NAAWU president, Jury Harris said that this was a 'milestone' in the union's 'proud history and tradition'.

He said the union had done research to find out why the majority of working people lacked formal education.

'The answer is that people in this country are kept oppressed and exploited, to ensure a pool of labour, by the laws that govern this country and the employers that we work for,' Brother Harris said.

'Workers are earning low wages and live from hand to mouth. You can't budget for the future of your children on the wages earned,' he added.

It was for that reason, he said, that NAAWU had committed itself to 'actively participate' in all efforts to unite all the oppressed people in South Africa 'irrespective of race, colour, sex or creed'.

Sugar workers sweet on SFAWU

SWEET Food and Allied Workers Union's organising drive into the sugar industry is beginning to pay off.

The union reports that hundreds of workers at Pongola and Matubatuba mills are resigning from the National Union of Sugar Manufacturing and Refining Employees (NUSMRE) and are joining the SFAWU.

Discussions are now underway with CG Smith for union recognition.

SFAWU said sugar workers throughout Natal had become disillusioned with the NUSMRE which was set up by the sugar bosses.

The SFAWU has also been making significant strides in other industries in Natal.

At Bakers BB Bread plant the union has ousted the Natal Baking Industry's Employees Union and talks towards recognition are nearly finalised.

And the signing of a recognition agreement with Universal Mills, now makes SFAWU the biggest union in Natal's milling industry.

The union recently won a major breakthrough when the

Port Natal Administration Board recognised it as the majority representative of workers at Congella Brewery.

However, at the KwaZulu Development Corporation's Imbali Brewery a major dispute is brewing.

SFAWU said the workers at the brewery were being paid 'starvation' wages — the starting rate is R120 per month —

MAWU says 'rubbish' to CI's sabotage claim

'INDUSTRIAL sabotage,' said the bosses at CI Industries at Pinetown.

'Rubbish!' replied the Metal and Allied Workers Union, 'the worker was just resetting his machine at the end of a shift.'

However, the company still insisted on firing a union shop steward for 'tampering with his machine in order to prevent workers from working overtime'.

But, this was not the end of the story.

MAWU refused to accept the shop steward's dismissal and

and were being 'abused' by management.

The union said the KDC had been 'evading' discussions on wages and it had 'no alternative' but to take legal action against the KwaZulu Development Corporation.

continued to pester the company which finally agreed to refer the issue to arbitration.

It was agreed that two arbitrators be appointed — one by the company and the other by the union — and both sides would put forward their case.

It only took the arbitrators a short while to make their decision.

The shop steward was taken back and given full back pay for the time he was off.

Another victory in the union's struggle against unfair dismissals.

Arise Sir Garth!

AN ODE

By a shop steward at SA Nylon Spinners

(Written during wage negotiations and dedicated to his boss)

A certain guy named Garth was invited to the Queen's Ball to be knighted

At her call, he kneeled and she touched his shoulder with her sword saying

'Arise Sir Garth.'

Sir Garth apparently did not hear.

So again, she said 'Arise, Sir Garth.'

Those present held their breath — Sir Garth was still kneeling!

Her majesty, the Queen, knelt down and whispered in his ear.

'Arise, Sir Garth, Arise.'

So, the Honourable, Sir Garth replied

'Lady, I work at Sans. I do not know what a rise is.'