

Mondi workers storm boss's office



Shop stewards from all the Mondi mills represented by the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union discuss how to deal with the company's refusal to negotiate wages at factory-level. This was the first time that all the shop stewards from the five Mondi mills had met. All the mills have now swung behind the demand for a R3 an hour minimum.

ABOUT 150 workers recently marched on their management's office at Mondi Paper mill near Durban and demanded to know why the company had refused to negotiate wages with the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union.

And two departments came to a standstill at the Merebank mill while the workers demanded that Mondi respond to the union's minimum wage demand of R3 an hour.

Similar demands were made at

other Mondi mills where the PWAU has majority membership.

The majority of the workers at five out of the six Mondi paper factories in South Africa have joined the union so that PWAU now represents over 60 percent of the workforce in the group's paper mills.

Union shop stewards have been recognised at the five mills.

But the company insists that

to negotiate wages, PWAU must enter the industrial council and give up the right to negotiate any issue at plant level - if it is also negotiated at the industrial council.

A PWAU organiser said this was 'unacceptable', especially since the present industrial council represents less than 10 percent of the workers in the pulp and paper industry.

'Last year the union nearly took Mondi to the Industrial

Court for refusing to recognise the union at the Merebank mill.'

'This year it looks as if conflict looms ahead over PWAU's right to negotiate wages for their members at Mondi,' the organiser said.

The Mondi workers are demanding an additional wage increase to the 8 percent they received in terms of the December industrial council agreement.

A joint meeting of shop stewards

from the two Durban factories has taken place and a joint meeting of shop stewards from all the five mills is scheduled.

'It has become clear to union members in all the Mondi factories that in their struggle for the right to negotiate wages with their bosses, workers must be united not only in each factory, but also in the entire Mondi company,' the PWAU organiser said.

MAWU prepares for this year's metal wage talks

THE preflight preparations have begun for this year's wage battle at the metal industry's industrial council.

And once again the Metal and Allied Workers Union has pledged itself to raising the minimum wage up to a living wage.

MAWU will demand a living minimum wage of R12,50 a week and an across the board increase of R22,50 a week.

It will also put forward other demands in its bid to substantially improve the working conditions of metal workers - these are very similar to the demands put forward by the union last

year.

'The reason why our demands have not changed much from last year,' said Brother J Vilane, MAWU president, 'is that in 1983 SEIFSA did not give serious attention to what our members wanted.'

'So we decided to tell them again this year - we believe they will soon get the message from MAWU's members. When we reach agreement on these demands, then we will make new ones.'

He added that obviously the wage demand had been increased

as the cost of living had risen.

'The sales tax has gone up, rent has increased and transport expenses are huge,' Brother Vilane said.

MAWU's other demands are:

- * a forty hour working week.
- * a maximum of five hours overtime to be paid at double rates during the week and triple rates on weekends.
- * one month's notice on termination of service for weekly and monthly paid employees.
- * exemption from the main agreement only to be granted if supported by workers in the

factory concerned.

* stop order and access facilities be granted automatically to any union (registered or unregistered) which has 50 percent membership or 500 members in any factory.

* a procedure for lay-offs be used instead of retrenchment.

This year MAWU intends to push SEIFSA to open talks in March in order to give union members more chance to discuss the negotiations.

It will also make sure that all of MAWU's demands are properly considered by SEIFSA.

Workers reject TUCSA union

'WE never agreed to belong to the South African Typographical Union in the first place. We want the union of our choice.'

This was the response of the 800 workers at two Transvaal factories, Print Pack and Kohler Corrugated, to the industry's closed shop which forced them to belong to this TUCSA union.

It began their long struggle to win the right to be represented by the union they had chosen - the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union.

Recently they joined the four other PWAU factories which have been exempted from the closed shop.

During last year the workers at these two factories resigned from the TUCSA union and demanded that their management apply for an exemption from the closed shop.

Workers said that the TUCSA union did not represent them in the factory or fight for their rights.

'That is why we joined PWAU. We want a union, not a benefit society,' they said.

The closed shop had been negotiated between the Typographical Union and the bosses. It had never been agreed to by black workers, the workers said.

A PWAU organiser said the union had now begun the struggle to make sure that all the workers were refunded their full pension fund contributions by the Typographical union.

'The struggle against one of the most powerful members of TUCSA is not yet over,' he said.

Barlow's policy reversed

WORKERS at Barlow Rand's Brollo Africa factory in the Transvaal have successfully overturned a head office policy to not give across-the-board increases.

But it was a long, hard battle to get the 13c an hour increase.

The wage talks at the factory, which began in October last year, soon deadlocked and the dispute was referred to mediation.

The company refused to budge so workers decided to ban overtime.

At this Brollo Africa launched an industrial court case charging that all 'illegal strikes' are unfair labour practices.

However, before the matter could be brought to court, the company reopened negotiations with Metal and Allied Workers Union shop stewards which soon settled on a 13c across-the-board increase.

Worker choir in action

WORKER choirs are shooting up all over the place in FOSATU. Here, it is the Simba-Quix choir which sang at the Annual General Meeting of the Transvaal branch of Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union. About 300 union members attended the meeting which, as well as other things, discussed the United Democratic Front - those at the meeting completely supported FOSATU's non-affiliation.

