

SUPREME COURT RULES AGAINST GLACIER BEARINGS

Death leads to safety campaign

All workers at Light Castings in the Transvaal have signed a petition demanding better safety regulations following the death at the factory of Mandla Dlamini, an executive member of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union. His death was a grievous loss to the Union, and workers in his factory are determined to know why this member had to die, and what steps can be taken to improve safety conditions in the plant.

Brother Dlamini's death occurred partly because a safety gate was deliberately taken off by management to improve the speed of production on the machine. Because the gate was off, and the machine had been rewired to ensure that it could work without it, it was possible that a person could be inside the machine, and the machine could operate.

Workers at Light Castings are determined that such an accident should not happen again. All workers have signed a petition, demanding the following things from management:

1. that a safety shop steward be appointed with the right to inspect any machine for lack of safety. This shop steward should also have the right to call in any expert to assist him in making the factory safe.
2. shop stewards shall have the right to have a meeting with management to discuss any problems with safety in the plant.

Clearly its time for organised worker intervention in safety procedures at Light Castings.

Glacier Management's alternative to trade unions, an "Industrial Relations Committee" received a bitter blow as the Supreme Court ruled against them in Durban.

A dispute between organised workers and management started two years ago when workers elected MAWU shop stewards on to the liaison committee. They then campaigned for the recognition of their union.

Management refused to recognise MAWU and even refused the committee a right to negotiate on any other matter. Mr. Richards the managing director of Glacier Bearings put it in this way in June 1978, "There are two options, either we continue with the present Liaison Committee system without negotiation or an alternative, acceptable to all must be found".

Managements solution was simple. Since recognising MAWU was unacceptable to them the Liaison Committee would stay until workers accepted their new alternative to trade unions - the Industrial Relations Committee.

In less than 60 days they set up the new committee without workers' consent to represent all workers" up to the level

of section manager" on which production workers would be a minority. All negotiations were to take place in this forum.

To stop workers setting up a works committee they kept the liaison committee in name. It never met, no elections were held but management claimed it existed.

Shop Stewards had to bring an application to court for an order declaring the liaison committee non-existent and compelling management to set up a works committee.

Management opposed this saying amongst other things that the liaison committee could only be dissolved with their consent.

The Supreme Court ruled against the company. It declared the liaison committee non-existent and ordered management to comply with the workers' requests within ten days and to pay their costs in the case.

MAWU shop stewards were unanimously elected to the works committee. Management must face realities, whilst they can stubbornly resist MAWU's recognition, they cannot force workers into committees management sets up to frustrate union recognition.

NEW LEATHER UNION FORMED

Over 300 Indian and African leather workers met in Pietermaritzburg on April 19 to form a new non-racial union.

The new union the Tanning, Footwear and Allied Workers Union (TFAWU) has applied to affiliate to FOSATU.

Conditions in the leather in-

dustry have been bad for many years and workers have been struggling for their voice to be heard by management. The main aim of the new union is to build a strong organisation among workers on the factory floor so that they can negotiate with their employers.

Rainbow Workers Not Guilty

The Camperdown magistrate was wrong in convicting 52 Rainbow workers of having participated in an unlawful gathering according to the two Supreme Court Judges hearing the workers' appeal in Pietermaritzburg.

Their convictions and sentences were set aside and the state ordered to refund the workers their R50 00 fines.

The appeal decision was the final episode in the police intervention in the Rainbow Workers' strike over the dismissal a union shop steward, Virginia Ndlovu.

For the workers, however the appeal victory was small compensation. Workers had been bitten by police dogs and gassed when riot police disperse a peaceful gathering of the striking workers.

One worker was hit in the eye by a tear gas cannister and badly hurt. Worse still about 150 workers lost their jobs as the strike failed.

"We lost a lot of ground at Rainbow" a worker spokesman said, "but the struggle for union rights takes time. Whether employers like it or not, we're starting all over again."



Mr. Kraai Chairman of the Inaugural meeting of TFAWU.