

Three metal unions reject 'final' offer

THREE major metal unions – the Metal and Allied Workers Union, the SA Boilermakers' Society and the Steel, Engineering and Allied Workers Union – have rejected the metal employers' last offer in talks at the industrial council.

The three unions are all members of the SA Coordinating Council of the International Metalworkers' Federation.

This is the first time that other unions have joined MAWU in its attempts to win better wages for the industry's largely unskilled black workers.

Last year, all the other unions on the metal industry's huge industrial council sold-out and signed the agreement with SEIFSA, the employers' federation.

This year the craft unions under the umbrella of the Confederation of Mining and Building Unions have all accepted the employers' offer but the Boilermakers and CUSA's metal union have joined MAWU in its rejection of the offer.

At the last wage talks held on May 15, SEIFSA said it could only offer a 20c increase on the minimum – which would bring it up to only R1,73.

This is still way off, MAWU's demand of a minimum wage of R2,50 an hour.

At this stage SEIFSA has said this was its 'final offer' but the three IMF unions have called on SEIFSA to reconsider.

During the industrial council talks, MAWU organiser, Dr Bernie Fanaroff, attacked the metal employers for 'at no point considering our proposals'.

He said there was no doubt in his mind that MAWU's members would send the negotiating team back next year and in 1986 and again in 1987 with the same proposals until SEIFSA paid attention to them.

Adding to this MAWU president, Jeffrey Vilane said that the union had put in a reasonable demand but 'it is quite clear to us that the employers are treating us unfairly'.

'I want to make it clear that when we leave this meeting we are going back to our members

and individual employers, and every employer at this meeting knows where MAWU is and we will demonstrate our muscle to each and every employer,' Brother Vilane warned employers at the council talks.

Meanwhile, MAWU is pushing the same demands in the separate Cable Industry negotiations.

Initially, the Cable employers had announced at the industrial council meetings that it did not want separate negotiations – this was strongly rejected by MAWU.

At this stage, the Cable employers have informed MAWU's cable industry shop stewards that they are not prepared to better SEIFSA's final offer.

Pensions!

THE issue of pensions has reared its head again following the setting up of a select committee to look once more at the preservation of pensions.

Already, it has led to a strike at a Pinetown paint factory and unions report that workers are once again expressing concern about their pensions.

Three years ago, the infamous Pensions Preservation Bill which threatened to 'freeze' workers' pensions set off a wave of strikes throughout the country.

More than 20 000 workers at over 40 factories stopped work in support of demands for the withdrawal of their pension money.

As a result of this wide-spread worker protest, the government withdrew the Bill.

But recently it has announced the setting up of a select committee which among other things will look again at the issue of pension preservation.

In direct response to this announcement, workers at Berger Paints demanded to speak to management about their pensions.

A Chemical Workers Industrial Union organiser said management had initially responded by saying that workers did not really understand pensions.

They suggested that officials from the fund come to the factory to explain to workers how the fund operates, he said.

On hearing this, workers stopped work and only agreed to go back when the company agreed to negotiate the terms of Berger's pension fund with the union.

It is clear that the freezing of pensions has been rejected by workers and FOSATU hopes that this time the government will consult with workers' representatives before taking any steps towards introducing a new pension bill.

Maritzburg factory pays R6 500 to 5 workers following retrenchment

PIETERMARITZBURG engine manufacturer, Deutz Diesel has agreed to pay out R6 500 to the Metal and Allied Workers Union following the retrenchment of five workers.

MAWU was in the process of taking the company to the industrial court for its failure to negotiate the retrenchment of the five workers with the union.

However, the company decided to settle out-of-court.

Deutz Diesel has agreed to re-employ the retrenched workers when suitable vacancies arise.

It has also signed a preliminary recognition agreement with MAWU giving it stop order facilities, access to the factory and shop steward recognition.

In a similar settlement, Smith and Nephew in Pinetown has

agreed to take back 10 retrenched workers and to pay-out a substantial sum of money in compensation to other retrenched members of the National Union of Textile Workers.

The company retrenched 30 workers following the ten-day strike by its entire workforce earlier this year.

During the strike, management issued a pamphlet threatening to retrench workers saying that because of the stoppage the company was unable to fulfill its orders.

Shortly after the workers returned to work, Smith and Nephew went ahead with its retrenchment without any consultation with the union.

NUTW declared a dispute with the company for refusing to

consult the union.

In the settlement, the company agreed to take back 10 workers and to give temporary work to five, who would be given special preference when vacancies become available.

However, with one dispute settled another looms on the horizon.

NUTW reports that Smith and Nephew has said that if the wages for January 1985 were not agreed to before that date, it would not pay any back-pay.

NUTW general secretary, John Copelyn said this was a departure from the company's practice over the last ten years.

He said this was totally unacceptable to the union and it would merely heat up the situation unnecessarily.

Pictures from MAWU's AGM



Over 2 000 workers went to the Annual General meeting of MAWU's Southern Natal branch held at Curries Fountain in Durban. It wasn't possible to get them all into one photo so here are some pictures of some of those who attended the successful meeting. In the picture above is one of the MAWU choirs which sang at the AGM.