

Henkel backs down

IN a major victory for worker organisation, the Henkel company in Durban has capitulated and settled its dispute with the Chemical Workers' Industrial Union.

The settlement has come after the CWIU called a boycott of Henkel products which was backed by FOSATU at its second national congress held last month.

Soon afterwards, Henkel began negotiations with the union through a third party and eventually signed a legally binding agreement of settlement in which it has conceded all the union's demands.

REINSTATEMENT

The settlement provides for the full reinstatement of Henkel workers who had gone on strike in March this year without loss of long-service benefits.

These workers will be returned to their original positions, or where this is not possible, to equivalent positions at their previous wages.

Workers returned to work in two groups on May 3 and May 10.

Henkel also agreed to:

*a secret ballot carried out jointly by the company and the union so that shift workers can decide on their hours of work. The original dispute was triggered off when the company tried to force

workers to accept either longer hours of work or less pay.

*Accept the union's disciplinary procedure.

AGREEMENT

*Negotiate in good faith a full agreement with the union according to a set timetable, and to finish negotiations by the end of this month.

*Accept a retrenchment procedure by which workers will be dismissed in the following order: temporary employees (i.e. scabs); volunteers; and then according to the principle of first in, last out (Lifo).

Those retrenched will receive three months' notice, retrenchment pay of one and a half weeks' wages for every year of service, and four mornings off to find employment elsewhere.

Also, disputes over "key positions" in the company which are not liable for retrenchment will now go to arbitration.

VICTORY

Chris Dlamini, national president of FOSATU, has said the settlement is a major victory for both the CWIU and FOSATU.

"The union has shown its organisation and discipline and FOSATU has shown its strength.

"Perhaps employers will now realise that they must negotiate in good faith with FOSATU unions," he said.

Victory for worker organisation



DELEGATES at FOSATU's recent national congress with a Henkel boycott banner.

NAAWU takes historic step

First national wage demand

IN a historic step, the National Automobile and Allied Workers' Union (NAAWU) has decided to formulate a national wage demand every year and to nominate a national negotiating team to submit it to employers throughout the country.

FIRST EVER

NAAWU has been able to take this step as it has become the first union in FOSATU and probably in South Africa which can claim to be a truly national industrial union.

NAAWU now has 40 percent membership of all workers in the automobile manufacturing industry, and no other union in any major industry in South Africa has been able to claim a membership as large as this.

The union has representation in every motor assembly plant in the country and is well on the way to achieve this in the tyre and motor components industries as well.

NAAWU's decision—a landmark in South African labour history—was taken at its last national executive committee meeting held in March.

The meeting decided that this year's national minimum wage demand will be R3,50 an hour. This will be submitted to every factory where the union is represented for negotiation.

Explaining the background to this demand, NEC member John Gomomo has said:

"Before, we were demanding a living wage of R2 an hour. Now, we want to give workers a share in the fat of our land."

JOB GRADES

NAAWU will also demand that job grades be reduced from eight to three. The new proposed grades will just be for skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Roy Msiza, chairman of Sigma's shop-stewards' committee, explained that the large number of grades now in use were merely a tool used by management to divide workers against one another.

The wage differences between the grades amounted in many cases to one or two cents and workers often did the same work.

The union had therefore decided that the work done in the factory could easily

be divided up into three grades only, he said.



NEC member John Gomomo... "We want R3,50 an hour".

SA Fabrics taken to industrial court

THE National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW) is taking SA Fabrics of Rossburgh to the industrial court over some of the harshest retrenchments executed by any textile employer this year.

When the company retrenched 60 workers, it gave the union 36 hours notice of the dismissals; selected workers for retrenchment without taking length of service into account; and introduced overtime for remaining workers at the same time.

Some of the dismissed workers had worked for the company for more than twenty years.

The union will ask the industrial court to rule that the company has committed an unfair labour practice.

ORDER SOUGHT

It will ask the court to order:

*that all retrenched workers should be reinstated.

*that the company should not retrench workers without giving the union 30 days notice, and allow it a reasonable opportunity to negotiate a fair procedure for retrenchments which may be necessary.

SA Fabrics is a subsidiary of a British company and the union also wants to lodge an official complaint with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) over the retrenchments.

Commenting on the retrenchments, the union's general secretary, Obed Zuma has said: "They know damn well

they couldn't do it in Britain. Why do it here?"

ILLEGAL

In Britain, retrenchments such as those executed by SA Fabrics would not only be unfair but also illegal, labour-experts say. In terms of codes of conduct for multi-nationals operating in South Africa, all parties to the ILO have agreed that subsidiaries will operate their factories here in accordance with internationally accepted standards.

This will be the first time that the industrial court will have to state its position on retrenchments and it remains to be seen whether it will impose the same standards in South Africa as are commonplace overseas.

Union attends world auto congress

FOUR delegates from the National Automobile and Allied Workers' Union (NAAWU) attended the eighth IMF world automobile workers' congress held in Tokyo, Japan, at the end of April.

The delegates, Roy Msiza (Sigma), Natie Gantana (Leyland), Wilson Jonas (Ford) and Les Kettledas (Eastern Province regional secretary) were among 143 delegates representing 4 million workers in 26 countries around the world.

EXPLOITATION

The auto workers' congress first met in 1966 when it became clear to unions that the motor corporations were increasingly operating on a global scale. Workers were now confronting motor companies whose headquarters were in another country and which had the ability to switch investment and produc-

tion to areas where exploitation and profits were high.

At a stroke of a pen, hundreds of thousands of workers could find themselves jobless as a result of a multinational company's decision to move production from a high-paying country like Britain to a low paying one like Brazil.

CRISIS

The eighth auto congress met against a background of crisis in the motor industry. As the official statement released after the congress said:

"With one or two exceptions, not a single delegation to this conference looks forward to more jobs in the industry." All predict less work.

The congress laid the blame for this on the shoulders of the auto companies and governments, which have looked

towards increased profits and production at the expense of the workers and the community at large.

RESOLUTIONS

Major resolutions were:

*to oust "right-wing, monetarist, anti-labour governments" and replace them with authorities placing the interests of workers first.

*to standardise wages and other labour costs in the motor producing countries. "Higher wages and better working conditions do not mean fewer jobs but more productive jobs," congress said.

*to equalise the work week and work year by reducing working time, eliminating overtime and increasing vacations and holidays.

*to call for harmonized standards of job security. Noting that job security is

greatest and employment fluctuation smallest where workers and unions have most say in management, congress also voted to press for an active voice in company decision-making procedures.

SOLIDARITY

Commenting on the congress, Roy Msiza, NAAWU chairman at Sigma, said: "The congress was important in showing how important international solidarity between workers is.

"Workers in all countries face the same problems, and increasingly with the development of the multi-nationals, the same employers.

"It also became clear to us that Japanese workers were as hard pressed and exploited as any other car worker and that employers should not hold up the example of the happy and productive Japanese worker to us in South Africa."