

Step forward for worker solidarity

solidarity

IN a major step forward for international worker solidarity, the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union has strengthened its links with one of the world's biggest unions — the IG Metall in Germany.

Recently NAAWU president, Jury Harris, VW branch chairman, John Gomomo and union organiser W Monqo visited Germany and met with people at all levels of the IG Metall.

As a result of the visit, the IG Metall has committed itself to 'fully supporting the struggles of the oppressed workers in South Africa'.

The NAAWU delegation were guests at IG Metall's Congress where the newly elected president, Hans Mayrs, stressed the need for international solidarity.

Apart from this, the delegation visited shop steward councils at the major motor plants, including the giant VW plant at Wolfsburg.

In their report, the delegation said the shop stewards were extremely interested in the situation in South Africa and they discussed FOSATU's shop steward structure.

LINKS

The NAAWU delegation underlined the importance of international links between worker movements to all they met.

The delegation said that management were very co-operative with each other and the flow of information between them was 'very fast'.

'It is high time that workers move away from concerning themselves only with the problems of their factories.

'We should be considering all the workers involved in the same industry right around the world,' the delegation said.

They stressed that this would prevent management using one group of workers against another.

The importance of these links became evident in the visit itself.

The South African delegates were able to discuss with their German colleagues the problem of 'robots'.

ROBOTS

At the Wolfsburg plant, the delegation visited an area which was completely operated by robots and as a result hundreds of workers had lost their jobs.

It was important to discuss how they tackled the problem of robots with German shop stewards, as in South Africa VW is already talking about introducing robots into the Port Elizabeth plant.

During the visit arrangements were made to exchange information between IG Metall and NAAWU on a regular basis.

NAAWU was also represented at another meeting which linked workers worldwide — the International Metalworkers Federation's World Council on SKF.

The World Council meeting was attended by 40 worker representatives from ten countries around the world.

In his report, Eastern Province regional secretary, Les Kettleidas said the SKF World Council had been very useful because 'detailed discussion took place about a multinational company in the process of restructuring its operations worldwide, and the effects this would have on the workers'.

He said that World Councils could become a great source of information and exchange of views, which would make the carrying out of support action more effective in the future.

NAAWU delegates (right) given a place of honour at the huge IG Metall Congress

Frame tries to wriggle out of Industrial Court case

FRAME is doing its best to avoid recognising the National Union of Textile Workers as the true representative of its workers at the New Germany mills.

Last FOSATU Worker News reported that the Minister of Manpower had finally appointed a Conciliation Board after five months in an attempt to settle the dispute between the National Union of Textile Workers and the giant Frame textile company.

Realising that Frame would never come to the Conciliation Board, the union saw this as a step towards the Industrial Court where it says it will present 'damning' evidence.

Frame appealed to the Minister to reverse his appointment of a Conciliation Board, but he turned this down.

Now the company is appealing to the Supreme Court to review the Minister's decision because,

Frame says, the original dispute no longer exists.

It is obvious that the company is using every tactic it can to keep out of the Industrial Court.

Meanwhile in the heart of the Frame empire — the New Germany mills — workers are flocking to join the NUTW.

At Pinetex, the second largest mill in the complex, hundreds of workers have resigned from the sweetheart Textile Workers Industrial Union (TWIU) and have joined NUTW.

However, the company is refusing to stop deducting TWIU stop orders and is trying to say that only TWIU can tell it to stop deductions for these workers.

NUTW general secretary, John Copelyn said the union viewed this refusal as a 'criminal offence' and would be taking this matter up.

R25 000 for locked-out workers

TWENTY-FIVE thousand Rand has been won by the Chemical Workers Industrial Union for workers who were locked-out at Bonus Fertiliser earlier this year.

And the company has agreed to take back about 30% of the workers.

Earlier this year the 65 union members at this Richards Bay plant arrived at work one morning to find that management would not let them in.

Majority unionism fought for

TRANSVAAL employers have been trying recently to force the Metal and Allied Workers Union to bargain at plant-level together with minority unions.

MAWU has slammed this move as completely unacceptable because it runs against the principle of majority unionism.

All FOSATU unions believe that the union which has the majority of workers as members should be regarded as the sole bargaining representative in the plant.

Branch secretary, Moses Mayekiso said that employers have tried to get MAWU shop stewards to participate in Company Works Councils which include all the unions which have membership in the plant.

'We cannot accept a situation

The company had claimed that the workers had been participating in a go-slow but this was strongly denied by the workers.

The CWIU said it was clear that this action was a 'disguised' retrenchment.

The company had been using the claimed go-slow as a way to avoid negotiating retrenchment with the CWIU, a union spokesperson said.

The union decided to take the company to the Industrial Court

on an unfair labour practice claim.

But minutes before the case was due to be heard in the court, the company began settlement talks.

* In terms of the settlement, Bonus agreed to pay out R25 000 and to take back half of the workers who were locked-out.

The money was shared out mainly among those workers who were not taken back.

where we are 90 percent representative, like at Usco Vaal and Klip, yet have to sit at the negotiating table and perhaps sign joint agreements with unions which represent as little as 2 percent of the workers,' Brother Mayekiso said.

'The company must negotiate with the majority union and the minority union and non-members must then fit in with that,' he said.

'We are going to fight this at all levels of our organisation,' he added.

Brother Mayekiso said the companies which had tried to push this on MAWU were — GEC, Boart Hard Metals, EMSA and MCG Plastics.

He said it was clear that the metal employers' association,

SEIFSA, was behind this.

'SEIFSA must realise that good industrial relations in the metal industry will only come about when it stops meddling with companies which want to negotiate with representative unions,' he added.

Brother Mayekiso said that SEIFSA was trying to form mini-industrial councils at every factory.

'But just like Liaison Committees and Works Committees they just won't work as they will be rejected by the workers,' he said.

'We believe that the majority union has the right to negotiate on behalf of all the workers in the plant. And we will force employers to honour that right,' he added.