

FOSATU WORKERS NEWS

MUNICIPAL WORKERS' STRIKE

THE FACTS

On the 14th July, 600 workers from the Orlando Power Station went on strike. By 17th July there were 10 000 municipal workers on strike.

FWN summarises some of the major points of the bitter struggle which followed:

. The burning grievance of the municipal workers was their wage - most were earning R33 per week which was just not keeping up with rising prices.

. The Council dismissing the 600 Orlando Power Workers was too much for thousands of others who then took to the streets demanding a living wage of R58 per week.

. Notwithstanding the strike the City Council refused to accept that workers had grievances.

. Instead of negotiating riot police were called in. Workers were locked in their compounds and guarded by riot police day and night during the last two days of the strike.

. The president of the Black Municipal Workers Union, Mavi was arrested at the Supreme Court as he tried to get protection for his Union members from alleged police intimidation.

. It seems that the agreement reached between the Black Municipal Workers Union and the City Council to stop sending workers back to the homelands was ignored and over 1000 workers were sent back to the homelands, many forcibly without pay and without even being given the choice to return to work. Other migrants were 'endorsed out' of the area to find their own way to the homelands.



Municipal workers packed in compound listen to Council's ultimatum.

THE ANTI-UNION LINE

The Municipal strike again showed how strong the anti-union feeling is. The new labour laws are not being used to open the way for union recognition. More and more employers are refusing to negotiate with unions chosen by workers and instead talking to other "tame" unions even though workers don't wish to be represented by these unions.

In the Municipal strike there was no doubt that although the Union (BMWU) did not start the strike its rapidly growing support among workers made it the only body capable of negotiating a settlement between the Council and the strikers. The Council however, insisted that it would only negotiate with a registered trade union.

The Johannesburg Municipal Workers Union (JMWU) was the Council's answer to its problem. The JMWU had virtually no members, all its committee members were nominated by management and not elected and in fact the JMWU even saw fit to ask management for permission to speak to the press.

burst of efficiency into granting provisional registration to the JMWU so that the Council had a "union to talk to". Speedy registration of this Union seemed to have solved the Council's problems - but what about the workers, their wages and their problems?

BAN ON FUNDS — FOSATU STANDS FIRM

FOSATU's affiliates are to fight the government ban on funds.

At the Central Committee they decided to fight as a united FOSATU rather than to apply for permission to raise funds separately. At present FOSATU is using the proceeds of the sale of its film to finance its activities. However, economy measures have already been taken and more will follow.

But as they say "out of adversity comes strength" and the Central Committee has set a two year target, for all affiliates to reach a position where they can

FULL-TIME SHOP STEWARDS BREAKTHROUGH



While the Johannesburg Municipality was showing everyone how NOT to achieve industrial peace FOSATU affiliates and the Ford Motor Co. in Port Elizabeth reached agreement on improved worker representation.

Ford and the FOSATU affiliated National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers (NUMARWOSA) and the United Automobile Rubber and Allied Workers Union (UAW) reached agreement on a system of one full time Shop Steward for every 750 workers.

The full time Shop Steward is elected by Union members and must report back to the Union Executive Committees at Ford. He remains an employee of the Company and is paid by them but he can only lose his position or his job by agreement with the Union.

An important part of the agreement is that part-time Shop Stewards will continue to handle grievances. One of the jobs of the full-time Shop Stewards will be to work with them and coordinate their activities.

"Worker problems arise on the factory floor and it is there the union must be effective - trade unionism must live on the shop floor" says Johnny Mke, President of UAW and FOSATU.

TRAINING

In another important step, Ford have agreed to make their facilities available to NUMARWOSA and UAW for union training courses for Shop Stewards.

Unions need trained and effective Shop Stewards to assist their members and the agreement is another advance in the right direction for better working conditions and more stable labour relations.

MUNICIPAL WORKERS SPEAK

Management "squeezed" at Colgate

The National press seldom covers what the workers themselves are saying. FWN spoke to municipal workers about their views on the whole event.

On the strike and how it started.

"Without Barnard's (Manager at Orlando) hardline attitude there would never have been a strike. Most workers initially went on strike to support the Orlando workers who were dismissed. The strike was not about anything except money and food not about fighting. The strike shows that when workers are hungry, the bosses call the police. That shows we won the strike, they had to use violence because we are stronger than them".

On the outcome of the strike.

"The strike has succeeded even if we are sacked because it has opened the eyes of all workers that if we are united we have strength; also that R33,00 is too little to live".

On whether the Union had been smashed.

"We are confident that the Union will grow because workers have been told by others who



Police - Council's answer to workers problems?

have lost their jobs through this thing (the union) that they must go on".

On the Johannesburg Municipal Workers Union (JMWU).

"We find it laughable to hear that JMWU claims 2000 membership. We do not see it in anyway as being a threat to worker organisation but rather see it as a non-issue".

On the fact that strikes are illegal in essential services.

"We didn't make that law. We know nothing about it. Workers will always strike when they are hungry, no matter where they work".

On whether they chose to return to the homelands.

"It is very difficult to argue with a gun".

On their future in the homelands.

"We have not lost hope. Many of us are from the same villages; we will meet again at home and we will spread these ideas to other workers when we get jobs".

Colgate management appear to be getting some tips from "Union - busters" in the United States of America. "Union - busters" are special consultants who advise management on how to use new and better tactics to break the power of the unions.

Colgate's latest trick has been to attempt to prove to workers that they don't need a Union. Management introduced a FREE burial scheme with a R500 death benefit which is a much larger sum than the Union's death benefit.

Workers responded with one voice saying "we want what we're asking for now, not when we're dead" and refused the burial scheme. The following week management tried to direct all grievances through the Liaison Committee.

Workers successfully boycotted this system as two hundred workers had petitioned their liaison committee members to resign. Management still refuses to talk to the union. Their present excuse is that Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU) is unregistered.

However it will be interesting to see management's next anti-union move following Sullivan's recent statement that they must talk to unregistered unions.

REEF CHEMICAL WORKERS' DETERMINATION BRINGS RESULTS

Workers at Reef Chemical in Benoni have won many issues in the short time that the Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU) has been organising there. This is despite management's attempts to introduce another Chemical Union. Workers remained steadfast in their determination to join the Union of their

choice. At the first stage of negotiations workers won recognition for their Shop Stewards, and access to the factory for Union officials. More recently management has agreed to

- allow Shop Stewards to take up worker grievances
- give the Union special facilities for collect-

ing subscriptions in the factory

- free overalls for all workers
- new and more effective health and safety measures in the factory

Although working conditions are still far from satisfactory, with constant union pressure they should continue to improve.

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THE FOSATU CLOTHING PROJECT

SUPPORT US

SEE OUR CATALOGUE AT YOUR LOCAL FOSATU UNION OFFICE

HOW DO YOU RATE AS A UNION MEMBER?

Do you know.....

- Who owns your factory?
- Where does your Union meet at your factory?
- Can your foreman dismiss you for no reason?
- How much profit did your company make last year?
- How much have you contributed to your Company's Pension Fund?

(See page 4 for answers)

