

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.