

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.



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)

