

Natal Die Casting strike in fifth month

AS the Natal Die Casting strike entered its fifth month, workers were still determined to push onwards.

The workers went on strike when management refused to up its wage offer of R29. After a few days the company sacked them all and began to hire scabs.

In an interview with FOSATU Worker News, Metal and Allied Workers Union shop stewards said many families were facing problems of hunger and sickness, particularly the bigger families.

The food parcel provided by the Metal and Allied Workers Union consisting of mielie meal, soup, sugar, tea, and sometimes some tins, was not really enough to live on, they said.

However, in spite of this the strike had remained solid and none of the 125 workers had gone back, the shop stewards added.

Some of the workers, they said, had taken on temporary jobs in order to bring in some money.

Some were doing woodwork and selling it, some were sell-



Striking Natal Die Casting workers at one of their fortnightly meetings

ing fruit, and others were working as gardeners, they added.

The shop stewards said the

strikers met every two weeks to discuss their problems and to distribute the food parcels.

They said that the strikers

were awaiting the union's court case against Natal Die Casting which is due to begin sometime in November.

BRIEFS

Proof enough?

ONE of the issues that often drags out negotiations over union recognition in South Africa is that there is no generally accepted way of proving that a union has majority support.

At Frame the issue was eventually solved by getting three qualified auditors to interview workers who had signed stop order forms.

At Bata, the company has said that the only way to prove majority was if their liaison committee told them that the workers wanted a union.

Recently at FM Clothing in Mooi River, workers signed on with the National Union of Textile Workers.

To cut short queries about majorities, the workers suggested that the easiest way was for the company to come and inspect attendance at a general meeting held outside of the factory.

The company agreed and within a week the meeting was arranged. It was attended by over 90 percent of the workforce. Proof enough?

Prompt action

PROMPT action by the entire workforce at the giant Volkswagen motor plant at Uitenhage probably prevented a lengthy period of detention for VW's four full time shop stewards and a branch executive member.

On hearing of the detention of Brothers P J Gomomo, J C Harris, C S Mpushe, A Balintulo and E Antonie, on August 29 the workers all downed tools and refused to go back until they had been released.

Detainees freed

CHEMICAL Workers Industrial Union branch chairperson, Brian Moholo, and Sasol organisers, Tsedisio Ntaopane and Beki Ntshalinthali, were released in Secunda after 14 days in detention.

The CWIU's Transvaal branch moved swiftly to try and pressurize Sasol and the State to secure their release.

Shop stewards approached their managements and telexes were sent to the organised companies demanding that pressure be put on Sasol and the State otherwise they would face the consequences.

Printpak strike

ABOUT 90 workers at Printpak Gravure in Industria, Johannesburg, who went on strike on October 9 and occupied the factory in protest at the dismissal of a fellow worker, have been threatened with eviction by management.

Management gave workers until 3 pm on October 16 to return to work or face an eviction order but as FOSATU Worker News went to print this threat had not yet been carried out.

The workers, all members of the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union, are demanding the unconditional reinstatement of a worker who was dismissed because he refused to do two jobs at the factory. They are also calling for management to replace their foreman.

Discussions between management and the union have deadlocked.

Pefco settles thirteen disputes out-of-court

THIRTEEN disputes declared by the Metal and Allied Workers Union against Pinetown Engineering Foundry Company (Pefco) have been settled out-of-court.

After lengthy negotiations the company, which was regarded by unionists as 'undoubtedly the most anti-union firm next to Sarmcol', has agreed to negotiate a recog-

nition and a health and safety agreement with the union. It has also agreed to pay MAWU R4 400.

A series of industrial court cases dealing with the disputes were due to start at the beginning of September.

The disputes involved a range of issues including racially derogatory remarks made by supervisors, unfair

dismissals, the refusal to negotiate major issues with the union, the refusal to allow the union's doctor to investigate health and safety conditions, and the refusal to recognise shop stewards as the factory's health and safety representatives.

Pending the signing of the recognition agreement, Pefco has agreed to negotiate all

major issues with the union except wages which will be discussed during recognition talks.

In another out-of-court settlement, Pietermaritzburg firm, Ramsay's Engineering, has paid MAWU R2 066.

The union took the company to court after it fired two workers for allegedly sabotaging a machine.

'The company had no evidence to show whether it was one or the other so they responded by firing both workers,' a union organiser said.

Meanwhile, Pineware in Pinetown has paid the union R8 000 in settlement of a retrenchment dispute.

A MAWU organiser said the company retrenched workers according to Last In First Out (LIFO) per department.

'So they shifted workers to whatever department they were applying LIFO to. They got rid of whoever they wanted in that way,' he said.

'As part of the settlement we have concluded a retrenchment procedure which will better protect union members in the future,' he added.

CDA strikers back at work

ALL the workers dismissed from the CDA motor plant in East London last month when they went on a work stoppage in protest against management's insensitivity to conditions in the protest-torn townships have been taken back.

On September 3, 125 workers at CDA's A plant paint shop left work early because of the unrest situation in Duncan Village. They were supposed to finish work at 10 pm but left at 7 pm because they feared there would be problems if they re-

turned home late at night.

On September 4 the workers proposed to management that they change the shift arrangement for paint shop workers. Management refused to do this but workers left early once again. When they returned to work on October 5, the company dismissed the entire shift.

When the morning shift workers heard this they stopped work, demanding the reinstatement of the 125 who had been dismissed. They were also dismissed.

This led to the entire CDA

workforce downing tools on Tuesday, September 10. They remained on strike until September 20 when management agreed to re-employ all the dismissed workers at the same wages they had received before their dismissal. Management also agreed to reinstate their service benefits by the end of the year.

Although the shifts were not changed, as workers had demanded, management did make arrangements to guarantee the safety of workers travelling home late at night.

PG workers block retrenchments

WORKERS at PG Glass near Germiston have cleverly blocked management's attempts to retrench 22 workers — and in the end only two were laid off.

When discussions were initially held about the retrenchments, Chemical Workers Industrial Union shop stewards suggested that the factory should go on short-time but management would have none of it.

So the workers decided to go on short-time on their own initiative. They clocked in half-an-hour later in the mornings and left earlier each day.

The management were furious and threatened to take the union to court for breaching the agreement.

Eventually, the day before the retrenchments were due to take place the company suggested that the shop stewards look to see whether any workers were prepared to volunteer for retrenchment.

The workers began to hold meetings for an hour each day as a form of go-slow until management agreed to postpone the retrenchment for a week.

A week later the shop stewards came forward with their volunteers — the senior shop steward plus other highly skilled workers.

At this the company backed down and decided to retrench only four workers — but two were called back when shop stewards suggested that certain

jobs be created for them.

Meanwhile, workers at another PG Glass factory — at Epping near Cape Town — have also been having problems with management over retrenchment.

Last month, workers heard rumours that the company was going to retrench. In terms of the agreement the CWIU has with the company, all the alternatives to retrenchment have to be explored. So when workers met to discuss the issue, they decided to oppose the retrenchments.

When they approached management, short-time was agreed on. Workers would work one hour less. But after two weeks of short-time, workers

found that the salaried staff were not working short-time.

Again they met with management, who told them that additional export orders had made it necessary for these employees to work normal hours.

The workers disagreed with this reasoning, saying that if the company felt they were losing money to the extent that they were prepared to firstly consider retrenchment and then short-time as an alternative, they had to have all the employees working short-time. If this was not to be the case then nobody should work short-time.

After hearing this argument, management finally agreed to stop short-time.