

# NUM Wage Negotiations

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) this week proceeded with strike ballots on 27 gold mines and 18 collieries after a deadlock in annual wage negotiations with the Chamber of Mines. NUM Assistant General-Secretary, Marcel Golding, reports that votes will be counted at the weekend, 11 to 12 July, after which the union executive will meet to consider the result and plan future action. In the event of a "yes" vote strike action by more 200 000 workers in the mining industry is likely - unless the Chamber improves its offer in the near future.

The deadlock in negotiations between NUM and the Chamber of Mines came after two unsuccessful conciliation board meetings, and the Chamber's refusal of union offers of mediation or arbitration. At the last meeting, held on the 30/06/87, the mining houses made offers ranging from 17% (surface and underground) for workers in category 8, to 23% for such workers in category 1 on all gold mines. Three marginal gold mines (Marievale, Grootvlei, and Stilfontein) made offers ranging from 16% to 21,6% for all surface and underground workers. The increases offered on the coal mines ranged from 15% to 23,4%, Rand Mines and Amcoal offering the highest, Gencor and Lonhro offering the lowest.

The deadlock in negotiations was not broken despite NUM's reduction of its initial percentage demands: the union had demanded a 55% increase for workers in categories 1-4, and a 40% increase for workers in categories 5-8; these were reduced to 40% for categories 1-4 and 30% for categories 5-8. The category 8 worker is the highest paid represented by the NUM.

The parties also disagreed on a number of issues relating to working conditions, notably:

- \* The number of days holiday leave for workers in categories 1 to 8. NUM initially demanded 44 days paid leave but reduced this to 30 days at the last meeting.
- \* The union's demand that workers receive danger pay.
- \* The demand that the death benefit scheme be increased from three times the annual earnings of the deceased to five times the annual earnings, to be paid to the beneficiaries.
- \* June 16th as paid holiday.

Further demands made by NUM in the course of the negotiations have either been met or remain to be resolved. The Chamber agreed to

seperate negotiations on the Provident Fund, and agreed to approach the governments of the so-called independent states to end the system of deferred payments. The holiday leave allowance has been increased to 55% of the workers' monthly earnings. The unions demands for a live out allowance of R300 and a travelling allowance of R500 have been referred to plant negotiations by each mining company. On the question of an end to tax deductions, employers responded that they are compelled by law to make tax deductions and that they could not agree, in an industrial settlement, to break the law. The Minister of Manpower also refused to include this in the terms of reference at the concilaition board meetings. The Chamber also agreed to reduce by two hours on collieries, and one hour on gold mines the number of hours worked each fortnight by mineworkers. Previously, this amounted to 98 hours.

Despite the deadlock, the Chamber has unilaterally implemented annual wage increases from July 1, in some cases at rates marginally lower than those finally offered to the NUM. Given that the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA) is proceeding with strike ballots amongst 80 000 workers, there is now a possibility that massive strikes, involving both miners and metalworkers, will take place simultaneously.