

NUM declares dispute with Gold Fields of SA

COMMENT

The NUM has declared a dispute with Gold Fields of South Africa (GfSA) over its refusal to increase its contribution to the Mineworkers Provident Fund.

The NUM tried to persuade GfSA to make an extra one percent contribution to the Provident Fund, but without success.

About 80 000 workers are affected by the dispute.

Meanwhile a framework for a settlement of increases for 1992 has been reached with all Chamber gold mines, except GfSA.

Profit sharing

Low increases are offered

ranging from R29 to R92 on basic monthly wage, to be supplemented by a share of profits from some mines. Basic wage increases range from 6 to 8,9 percent.

With the exception of GfSA and Anglo Vaal, the following mines are prepared to participate in the profit sharing scheme: Freegold, Vaal Reefs, Western Deep Levels, Elandsrand, Salties, Blyvoor, Harmony, Buffelsfontein, Beatrix, St Helena, Unisel, Kinross, Winkelhaak, Grootvlei and Marievale.

JCI is not prepared to negotiate any profit sharing scheme with the NUM. Instead JCI

wants to continue with the discredited performance bonus scheme negotiated at last year's wage negotiations.

NUM members subsequently rejected this kind of scheme at the union's Central Committee meeting held in January this year.

Negotiations are still in progress at Harmony, Blyvoor and Sir Albert Robinson hospital with differing wage offers.

Harmony's increase is R30 for all grades, while Blyvoor is offering R25 and Sir Albert Robinson Hospital is offering a minimum increase of R35.

The bosses have declared an open war on workers by offering low wage increases.

Since last year mining bosses showed that they were no longer prepared to accept NUM wage demands.

The situation has been critical for some gold mines due to economic conditions.

Bosses took advantage of this situation to start a vicious attack on workers standards of life by making wage increases of 5 - 6 percent.

Wage increases of R45.00 for workers who earn R750.00 per month mean nothing but death through starvation.

This year, the war has been intensified as all mines and Eskom are committed to make huge profits by suppressing workers' wages even further.

While the bosses force starvation wages down the workers throats nothing is done to save jobs.

The loss of thousands of jobs in mining and Eskom have become commonplace. Retrenched workers are dumped in rural areas where they have to face starvation.

With the bosses stubbornly refusing to sign a national agreement with NUM to deal with the disease of redundancy, the situation becomes one of hopelessness.

It is a general rule for the bosses to save their industries by cutting down on workers wages and re-trench workers.

The bosses are applying this rule ruthlessly. Wage negotiations with NUM are turned into a public relations exercise as fixed and rigid positions dominate.

The arrogance of mining houses where workers are not well organised becomes even more glaring.

The time has come for workers to stand up and fight for a living wage and job security.

The first priority is the unity of all mineworkers and energy workers under NUM. The might of the bosses lies in unity in exploiting workers regardless of national or ethnic origins. For the bosses to go unchallenged they need a divided workforce.

The parasites in our midst must be made to realise that NUM members are no longer prepared to fight for the blood suckers.

Those who reap where they have not sown must be made to realise they can not get from NUM members free what they do not get free from the bosses. **FREE-RIDING MUST BE STOPPED NOW!**

Each mineworker must be an organiser of NUM. Organised workers can never be defeated.

Let us double our efforts to carry on with demands for a living wage and democracy. The current battles we are waging in various forms - mass protest marches, sit-ins, go-slows, defiance of racial discrimination, etc, have to be properly coordinated into a major battle to end poverty wages and repression by the bosses.

The Chamber gives in to non-economic demands

Agreement between the Chamber of Mines and the National Union of Mineworkers on non-economic issues was reached during the current wage negotiations.

These agreements are as follows:

- * The number of days of paid leave for shaft stewards to attend NUM training courses have been increased from four to five days per year.
- * The Chamber has agreed to pay lost shifts for comrades who attend wage negotiations.
- * The NUM will be given representation on the board of directors of the Rand Mutual Assurance Company, the company that pays benefits to injured workers and their families. NUM representation will allow us to force the mining industry to address problems around compensation.
- * The Chamber (except for Gold Fields) has agreed to pay the full cost of the increased premiums of the mineworkers Assurance and Benefits Scheme. The scheme was set up to pay for death and funeral benefits.
- * The Chamber has agreed to talk to the NUM about providing health care for the families of black workers.
- * The Chamber has agreed to make a joint approach to the government to amend the law on occupational diseases in mines to pay the same compensation to blacks and whites.
- * A charter of rights for disabled and injured workers and a "Medical Separation Agreement" to provide for workers who cannot work because of disease or injury is being finalised.

Millions of workers stayaway

More than four million workers stayed away from work on August 3 and 4, in support of the call by the ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance.

Although many bosses vowed not to pay workers who stay away, workers sacrificed their wages to show their support

for the removal from power of de Klerk's corrupt regime, and be replaced by a government that is committed to peace and democracy.

Major demands during the stayaway were the establishment of an interim government and an end to violence.

No agreement on full-time shaft stewards

A number of issues still remain unresolved in this year's wage negotiations between the Chamber of Mines and the NUM.

Some of these issues are:

* **Full-time shaft stewards:** the Chamber still says this is a mine-level issue, but has adopted an industry-wide policy to encourage mines to agree to full-time shaft stewards.

* **Arbitration on dismissal cases** the Chamber has refused to negotiate a national agreement on this issue, but will encourage mines to enter into such agreements with the NUM.

* **The Agency shop** the Chamber is against the idea of non-members paying a certain amount to the NUM for benefits enjoyed out of negotiations conducted by the union.

Only Harmony and Anglo American are prepared to have discussions on this issue.

Their proposal is for non-members to contribute one percent of their pay to a "Collective Bargaining Fund" or an "Industrial Relations Fund" every month.

Some of the money will come to the NUM. The rest will be spent on matters such as training in industrial relations, mediation expenses, etc.