

MINERWORKER NEWS BRIEFS

Diamond workers get increase

ABOUT ten thousand mineworkers had to go on a legal strike before they could reach a settlement with De Beers Consolidated Mines Limited.

This was after De Beers refused to meet their demands on wages and working conditions. NUM had demanded increases ranging from 15,6 percent to 37,6 percent backdated to May.

This would have brought the minimum monthly wage to R761. But De Beers made a final wage offer ranging from 15,2 percent to 18 percent, which would have brought the minimum wage to R553.

After tough negotiation between the union and De Beers combined with strike action a final settlement was reached. De Beers agreed to increase wages by 18 percent bringing the minimum wage to R653. Workers also won 1 May and June 16 as paid holidays.

Starving away at JCI

A STRIKE by 1462 mineworkers at Consolidated Murchison could not break the management policy of paying starvation wages.

The JCI owned mine pays wages which fall far below all poverty datum lines. When workers opted for a strike the monthly minimum wage was R318 while those working underground got R365.

The NUM was demanding a monthly minimum wage of R400, while management was offering a 13,5 percent increase.

At the end of the strike management agreed to pay an increase of R45 (13,8 percent) surface and R50 (13,6) underground. The increase brought the monthly minimum wage to R361 for surface workers and R365 underground.

NUM members do well at ISCOR

NUM members received a 23,6 percent wage increase for the lowest paid group at ISCOR.

This brought the current minimum to R502 when coupled with compulsory overtime. The wage increase was gained at Conciliation Board after other unions like BAMCU had settled for a lower wage offer. Other gains workers made included a 48 hour working week, May Day as a paid public holiday and June 16 to be swapped with 6 April.

Nearly 600 die in accidents so far

MORE than 591 workers have lost their lives in mine accidents since the beginning of 1989 according to official figures.

Over 8700 have suffered injuries during the same time. The real figures may be much higher. Kloof, Western Deep Levels and Vaal Reefs are the worst mines in terms of number of fatal accidents.

Canteen boycott at Rietspruit

A FOOD boycott by NUM members at Rietspruit Opencast Colliery has entered its fourth month with no resolution in sight.

Workers decided to boycott the canteen after management raised the price of breakfast from 60c to R1, and lunch from R1,20 to R2. Management refused to talk to the mine's shaft stewards on the issue, saying it was not work related. Workers are demanding management negotiate the increase and allow workers to take part in decision-making around the quality and quantity of food.

Other places where workers are involved in disputes around food are the Goldfields owned Zincor and Premier, near Pretoria.

Police teargas striking workers

ABOUT 650 NUM member won a wage increase of 13,8 percent after a three day strike at the Barlow Rand owned Rand Mines Milling and Mining.

Police were also present at RM3 on the first day. NUM members were teargassed and two were shot with rubber bullets. The company denied calling in the police. The following day six members were charged with threatening violences.

New Vaal stops for the day

ON 29 August workers at New Vaal Colliery went on an illegal strike for the day demanding the dismissal of a transport supervisor who was harassing union members.

Workers were also displeased with the mine manger who was delaying on issues such as production bonuses.

SAD, BRAVE DAY AS WIDOWS WIN



After a five year fight NUM won additional compensation of R25 121 and R7456 for the widows of two workers killed at Rietspruit Opencast Colliery in January 1984. The accident was caused by the negligence of mine officials. From left are: KENNY MOSIME of the NUM Legal Department, Mrs NKOSI, Mrs MAKANYA and General Secretary CYRIL RAMAPHOSA.

Mine food is eating workers

THE FOOD crisis on some mines has reached boiling point. Poor food means workers are losing both their health and money.

Mineworkers are taking the situation into their own hands by protesting the poor quality of food.

The main demand of workers is that they must be able to negotiate around food and form democratic committees to discuss matters such as food preparation, the quality and quantity of food and the planning of menus.

- At Consolidated Murchison near Phalaborwa, over 1000 workers have been boycotting the canteen since August. They are cooking in their rooms over primus stoves. Workers have complained about the quality and quantity of the food. Hygiene in the kitchen is poor, they say, and third rate meat and vegetables are served.
- The quality of meat on some mines is bad or undercooked. At Deelkraal, Carletonville, workers have confronted management about not getting enough meat and being served rotten sausages.
- Costs of food in mine canteens where workers pay is

being raised above inflation or wage agreements. This is the dispute at Goldfields-owned Zincor near Germiston.

- NUM members at Rietspruit Opencast Colliery have boycotted the canteen for five months. Workers decided to boycott the canteen after management raised the price of breakfast from 60c to R1, and lunch from R1,20 to R2. Management is refusing to talk to the mine's shaft stewards on the issue, saying it is not work related. Workers are demanding management negotiate the increase in food prices and that workers take part in decision making around the quality and quantity of food.
- The situation is bad at Western Deep no 3 and RM3, while workers joke at Sarmcor Limited Magnesium Mines is that the food is "slow poisoning".
- At President Steyn mineworkers in Shafts 1 and 4 took the food to the hostel managers. At No 1 the hostel manager said he was unable to eat the food. At No 4 the hostel manager tried but after the first bite he said he was "too full" and could not finish it.

NUM investigations into the whole question of food on the mines has showed many prob-

lems. Mineworkers suffer a lot more stress than other workers. They are exposed to danger, dampness, noise and long working hours.

Doctors NUM spoke to raised several problems with mine food. One called mid-shift feeding (mahewu) "an insult". He said the only answer was better nutrition and more breaks.

Some of the problems related to lack of food underground are heat fainting and mental lack of concentration which can lead to accidents.

In Chamber of Mines negotiations this year the bosses argued it cost them R137 a month to feed each worker. But NUM added up money spent by the Chamber on food. It worked out to R69 per coal worker and R59 per gold worker. If one adds on another R40 for cooking and staff (R69 + R40 = R109), the sum still falls short of what the Chamber is claiming.

The so-called scientific experiments by management on how least to feed workers per day are one step short of prison camps. They also ignore their own studies, at least 3 Chamber studies recommending official breaks underground to eat, rest and fetch water.