



Retrenchment victory!

After many rounds of negotiations, NUM has scored a major victory in fighting retrenchments. A retrenchment agreement was signed with Anglo's Freegold South Mine which reduces proposed retrenchments from almost 8 8 000 to 1 800.

The agreement lays down retrenchment rules & procedures. It is the first agreement which offers at least some form of protection against arbitrary retrenchments which have become the order of the day.

Ever since the mining industry began to retrench workers, NUM has accused the industry of trying to protect their profits, rather than save jobs. A huge anti-retrenchment campaign was launched. This included a massive show of strength by mineworkers as they marched in their thousands on Anglo-American's offices, demanding that retrenchments not be used as a union-bashing tactic.

At least 25 000 workers have lost their jobs in the past two years and mining companies have announced that more than 20 000 jobs will be lost by the end of this year. NUM estimates that 100 000 miners could be out of jobs within the

next 10 years.

Freegold South, which employs more than 107 000 workers is the biggest gold mine in the world.

According to the union's calculations, Freegold South would have saved R 100 million in wages had they gone ahead with the proposed 7 800 retrenchments.

However, the union argued that the retrenchments could be staved off if workers were given an additional three weeks' unpaid leave.

The second major victory which the union won was to ensure that retrenched workers would be re-employed as soon as possible at their existing rate of pay and that their transport costs to return to the mine would be paid by the company.

A similar retrenchment agreement was reached with another Anglo-American division, Amcoal. Amcoal agreed to establish a retrenchment fund of R1 million, which would be administered jointly by the union and the company and would be used to compensate retrenched workers.

While a million rand will not go far to address the needs of so many workers,

the principle established remains a victory for mineworkers.

The money will be used to train workers so that they can gain new skills. Paid for by the bosses, the training will include welding, motor mechanics, carpentry and brick-laying.

These agreements represent a significant step forward. For the first time in the history of the mining industry problems are being addressed through joint union/management consultation and negotiation.

After the announcement of massive retrenchments by mining companies a few months ago, NUM accused the bosses of economic mismanagement and a serious lack of social responsibility towards miners.

Now for the first time the bosses have been willing to discuss cost-saving measures and how to re-structure the mining industry during times of recession.

For NUM the retrenchment agreements reached are a hardwon victory. After many years of struggle to protect miners' rights NUM is making sure that people come before profits.

The fight for a living wage

The Annual wage negotiations between the Chamber of Mines and the NUM directly affect 220 000 of our members. However the negotiations also affect a further 300 000 mineworkers because the Chamber settlement is usually used as a basis for setting the wages for workers who are still unorganised and are not yet members of the union.

In 1990, the results of the Chamber negotiations were both good and bad.

BEST WAGE INCREASE SINCE 1987

How do we judge whether a wage increase is good or bad? The first way to decide is to see if the wage increases beat inflation. In the year July 1989 to July 1990, prices rose by 14 percent. This means that for every R100 a worker earned in 1989, he needs R114 in 1990 - just to be able to buy the same as he bought last year.

So for a wage increase to pass the first test of being "good" it must be above the 14 percent inflation level.

All the wage increases negotiated by the NUM with the Chamber of Mines were above the 14 percent inflation level.

	GRADE 1 INCREASE	GRADE 8 INCREASE
Recognised gold mines	17%	14,5%
Amcoal	18,6%	17,8%
GF coal	17%	14,5%
Douglas	15,8%	15,7%
Tavistock	17,5%	15%
Duiker	17,5%	17,5%
T-Natal	30,8%	15,6%
Durnacol	30,7%	17,5%

The coal wage increases were higher in percentage terms, because the union demanded that the gap between coal and gold mines needed to close and because

coal profits have increased a lot in the past year.

Overall the wage increases were the best won by the union since 1987. Despite the fact that the negotiations took place at a time when the gold price had fallen very low, the wage increases were surprisingly "good".

RAND INCREASES	
Anglo gold	68 - 177
Genmin gold	61 - 184
GFSA gold	55 - 169
★ Harmony	63 - 178
Amcoal	74 - 190
JCI coal	66 - 160
GF coal	55 - 158
Genmin coal	93 - 176
Douglas	78 - 178
Lonrho	53 - 178
★ Durnacol	94 - 172

This does not mean that the mine bosses were suddenly being "generous" with their increases, but that the organisation we have built up on the mines over so many years has made NUM a force to be reckoned with. Management is forced to take our demands seriously...

WHAT ARE OUR GOALS?

At the National Congress in 1989, NUM demanded:

- A national minimum wage for mineworkers to R600 underground and R543 surface;
- A common wage structure for the entire mining industry;
- Narrower wage gaps between black and white workers.

After long negotiations, the Chamber of Mines finally agreed that the wage structure was discriminatory. They agreed to work towards a common pay structure in the gold and coal mines.

While this is a major victory for the union, the Chamber refused to give any timetable for introducing one pay scale. This means that we have to continue to fight to see that this does happen.

GAPS BETWEEN MINING HOUSES

A further problem for the union is that again the gaps between the various mining houses have grown even bigger. Last year Goldfields paid R97 below Anglo. Now after further increases, the gap is R113.

This is a difficult situation for the union. Most of our members are at the "higher-pay" mines (that is why they pay more!). Why should well-organised Anglo workers get a smaller increase than less-organised Goldfields? We don't want to lower the wage levels of our highest paid workers just for the sake of a common pay structure. This defeats our whole fight for a living wage!

Our only cure is to build better organisation in the lower paying mines as well.

So while 1990 was a year in which we were able to make important gains, it is clear that we need to build organised strength in ALL our mines if we are really going to win a real living wage for ALL mineworkers.



Co-op in Swaziland

After a long battle of more than a year to get affordable land, dismissed Swaziland miners have started an agricultural Co-operative on a 135 hectare farm on the banks of the Usuthu River.

When NUM President, James Motlatsi recently visited the Swazi National Ex-miners Multi-Purpose Co-op, he was lost for words. Before, there was just bushveld, thorn-trees, lots of mambas and a few crocodiles on the land. Now, only two months after production started, the members have turned the veld into a farm.

"Next time you come, you'll be able to pull one of our carrots out of the ground and taste it for yourself," promised a member of the Co-op.

They have built accomodation, a large store-room, and are building a kitchen. They have laid the irrigation pipes for their vegetables, and their nursery has carrots, onions, and cabbage seedlings already growing.

Comrade Robert Hlatshwayo, Chairperson of the Co-op says " We had to clear five hectares of land by hand because the government promised to send a bulldozer to clear the land for planting; but as the days went by, we decided we cannot wait, we must start planting as soon as possible."

By the time NUM's President visited the farm, the first bean crop was already sprouting out of the ground. But there has been no rain in Swaziland. "You have seen our efforts," said Shangase, the Dry-Crop Co-ordinator. "We are really

pulling together. The only thing that can destroy us is nature."

But the Swaziland Co-op will not let nature destroy them without a fight. At present, they are working in shifts at night, watering their bean and maize crops by hand.

This Co-op has big plans. "We have already negotiated to sell our bean crop to the United Nations who need the beans for Mozambican refugees" explains Wellington Nhlengethwa, the Marketing Co-ordinator.

The first few months in a Co-op are hard. "We know that we have to wait for our first harvest to get wages," explains Robert. "but you can't owe the stomach." Realising that things would be tough in the beginning, the members met with many groups in Swaziland and negotiated a donation of several tons of maize, beans and oil from the European Economic Community. Now at least they can take food home for their families.

Each month the Co-op holds a general meeting of all members to get reports from their elected Co-ordinating Committee, to discuss problems and to plan production targets for the coming month.

They start each meeting by exchanging views and criticisms because as Hlatshwayo says "We can all learn from one another."

Their determination and commitment is something to see. On our arrival we were surprised to see that there were already neat residential rooms built on one side

of a cleared patch of land and a large store-room on the other.

Everywhere workers were busy. Some were making benches, some building a kitchen, others working in the fields.

Despite the fact that it took them so long to find affordable land, their unity and determination saw them through.

When asked what advice he would give to Co-ops just starting out, Comrade Hlatshwayo says "The hardest part of starting anything new, is lack of unity. Members must be encouraged to participate fully in the Co-op. This means that comrades must be disciplined, critical and committed to the production process within the Co-op."

Comrade Hlatshwayo's final word of advice: "Co-ops need people who are committed to helping themselves in order to succeed. Members have to take all education seriously, from sowing seeds, to watering and harvesting crops..."

"They should be realistic. It is only when members are realistic - when they are prepared to work hard, but at the same time not expect miracles overnight that a Co-op will succeed. It is only when members are realistic that they do not easily become discouraged when the first rain does not fall or the crops are slow in bringing in money.

"But when we see a good harvest it makes it all worthwhile - we are proving that although we are no longer miners, we are not defeated. We have become men of the soil and we are finally reaping the seeds we have sown."



Co-op workers discuss and plan production

The Workers' Charter

At the COSATU National Congress in July 1989 a resolution on the Workers' Charter was adopted. It was agreed that we needed to collect demands from workers to be included in a Workers' Charter and that we needed to involve all workers, both within and outside of COSATU.

WHAT IS THE WORKERS' CHARTER?

While some comrades in NUM have been attending workshops on the Workers' Charter, there are still many workers who do not know what the Workers' Charter means.

A Workers' Charter is a manifesto of all workers' demands. It sets out all the demands and rights which workers are fighting for, both in the short and the long term.

WHY DO WE NEED A WORKERS' CHARTER?

After years of struggle, the ANC and SACP have finally been unbanned. Some people feel that because of the talk of negotiations there will not be problems in the future. They think that the road to a new non-racial and democratic South Africa will be a smooth one.

But not all comrades think that the road will be smooth. There are many who feel that there will be many obstacles and detours on the road to freedom.

OBSTACLES ON THE ROAD TO FREEDOM

Many workers fear that a negotiated settlement will not meet all their demands as workers.

What happens when a new democratic government does come to power? Will workers still have the right to demand a

living wage? Will they still have a say in the economic policy of the government?

A NEW CONSTITUTION

The Pretoria Minute states that negotiations for a new constitution will soon take place.

A constitution is the most important law of any country. It gives rights and freedoms to the citizens. It also says what the government can and cannot do.

The present S.A. constitution is racist and only serves the interests of the white minority. We need a democratic constitution that will give rights and freedoms to all its citizens.



Delegates at the Workers' Charter Workshop

Because workers are the majority of citizens, it is important that above all, the constitution protects the rights of workers - ensuring that they have the right to to organise, the right to strike and so on.

Workers need to start thinking about what we need to say as workers and as COSATU. They need to ask "How do we best protect our rights as workers?"

CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

A Constituent Assembly is a democratically elected body, elected on a one person, one vote system. The party/organisation that gets the most votes will get the majority of seats in the Constituent Assembly. The function of the Constituent Assembly will be to draft a new constitution for a future South Africa.

But we cannot leave all the discussion about a new constitution until the Constituent Assembly. The ANC is already looking at a draft constitution. We as NUM and COSATU

need to look at what we want to see included in a constitution. The alliance of the ANC, SACP & COSATU may well put forward common proposals on issues that we agree on.

But because we are an organisation representing workers, we cannot allow other organisations to do our work for us - we need to be clear about OUR DEMANDS as workers. We can then feed our demands into the negotiating process as part of the COSATU/ANC/SACP alliance.

We cannot just sit back and expect others to think out demands which will meet our needs. We know what our daily problems are. Our years of struggle to build COSATU and to develop democratic worker leadership have taught us how important it is to establish guidelines for how we operate.

BUILDING A FUTURE SOUTH AFRICA

Building a future South Africa is like building organisation, we need to make sure all the ingredients are right.

We need to make sure, not only that the loaf of bread will rise but that as workers, we will be entitled to our fair share of the loaf.



COSATU General Secretary Jay Naidoo



NUM's Jesse Maluleka

ISSUES WE NEED TO DISCUSS

A COSATU Workers' Charter Conference was held on 17-18 November. 35 delegates from NUM attended. Some of the main issues discussed were:

- The right to strike;
- The right to organise as unions and to remain independent;
- The relationship of the unions to the new government and other political parties;
- The democratic process in constitution-making ie. by whom and how a new constitution will be drafted;
- Economic rights in the new constitution;
- Protection of the freedom of the media;
- Gender and the constitution eg women's and parental rights.

All these rights must be included in a new constitution if we are to protect what we have won through years of struggle.

CONCLUSION

Within NUM we have not gone far enough in this campaign. We must develop ways to involve the majority of mineworkers in the campaign. The collection of demands must continue. We must involve workers by discussing this at:

- Mass meetings
- Room discussions
- Shaft Steward Council Meetings
- Meetings with other organisations.

As NUM we need to discuss some of these issues in much more depth. We will be looking at specific demands in much more detail in future editions of NUM NEWS.