

# Workers drive bosses into a corner

THE EASTERN Cape has recently been shaken by a work stoppage at all Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage motor assembly plants.

The dispute lasted thirteen days after about 13,000 workers walked out during Industrial Council negotiations after employers refused to budge from a minimum pay offer of R2.15 an hour.

The union initially demanded a minimum wage of R3.50 an hour, but moderated their demands to R2.50 an hour.

At mass meetings however workers decided to return to work on condition that employers meet their demands later or face more strikes.

Shop stewards warned workers not to give management the opportunity to dismiss them 'on their own volition'. Workers would continue to press for their pay demands, but their strength lay within the factory.

About 3,000 General Motors workers assembled outside the firm's giant premises in Kempston Road and demanded to be let in.

Shop stewards argued with stern-faced security guards to open the gates but they said the plant would not open.

As workers pressed against the gates, hundreds streamed back into Kempston Road blocking traffic. After about two hours they returned home.

Workers also gathered outside Ford's four motor plants and at Volkswagen in Uitenhage.

At Ford's engine plant a shop steward argued heatedly with the plant manager.

'Our union representatives have reported back that the company would not negotiate wages because we are out on strike, meanwhile we are not,' he shouted. 'It is the company that is locking us out.'

The plant manager told workers that no discussion for a return to work had taken place so far and the



Flashback to 1980 Ford strikes. This year thousands of motor workers have gone on strike to demand higher wages

plant remained closed for the day.

After talks with shop stewards later in the week, Volkswagen began partial production on Friday July 23 and production at General Motors resumed after the weekend.

Ford announced plans to re-open their Cortina and engine plants where the majority of the 1,800 workers are members of a rival union the Motor Assembly and Component Workers' Union of South Africa (Macwusa) which has not backed the pay strike.

However a deadlock on the return to work procedure between Ford and Naawu delayed the re-opening of two of the four plants.

The union charges that its members have been locked out of the plants since they downed tools nearly a fortnight previously. Management says they have been on strike throughout the period.

The issue reached a climax when the union gave Ford a written warning from lawyers that it would seek a court order to have its gates re-opened.

The affected Ford workers initially refused to accept an arrangement that only a limited number of workers in a vital department should return a day before the others. The dispute ended after workers accepted Ford's offer to re-open another department accommodating 500 workers.

Labour observers believe that by demanding an assurance from the union that its members will go back to work, rather than with shop stewards on the factory floor, the union will be held responsible if members decide to go on strike again for their demands.

They have also warned that the major motor manufacturers are attempting to obstruct and hinder the growth of Naawu. They say workers in non-unionised firms or firms with weak union membership

have been given large pay increases while demands in unionised firms have been rejected by management.

Ford, General Motors and Volkswagen are refusing to budge from a 7.5 per cent increase in basic pay, from R2 an hour to R2.15 an hour. The union is demanding R2.50 an hour rising 25 cents every six months.

At Sigma, where Naawu has more than half the workers signed up and elected shop stewards in the plant, the firm granted an 18 per cent increase. But at two other Pretoria

motor firms, Datsun Nissan and BMW, where union membership is low and the unions are struggling to build up membership, employees have awarded high pay increases.

At BMW, where the union is not recognised and wages are discussed on an 'Employee Council' minimum pay has increased from R1.00 to R2.30 an hour this year. This makes BMW the highest paying motor worker employer in the country.

Naawu's umbrella body, the Federation of South Africa Trade

Unions, have charged that employers are co-ordinating on a national basis in an effort to check and even break the union.

Workers at Ford, General Motors and Volkswagen are still battling with the motor bosses and worker unrest has spread to other industries in the Port Elizabeth area.

There is a go-slow at Volkswagen and all three plants have rejected outright new wage offers. 900 workers who stopped work at Busaf bus body manufacturers were locked out on August 5.

## Mark Kaplan sent packing

EX-DETAINEE. Mark Kaplan was given an hour to pack before being deported to Zimbabwe.

Police arrived at his home on August 5 and told him to leave or go to jail until he agreed to leave. No reason was given for his deportation.



Detained, now deported

Kaplan worked for the Community Video Resource Association in Cape Town. He was detained at the end of 1981 for 51 days.

A group of family and friends including about 20 UCT students gathered at the airport to see Mark off.

At a UCT SRC meeting, a motion was passed expressing solidarity with Kaplan. It said that Mark wanted to expose the unjust nature of our society and he chose to do so through his work in the media. The SRC motion saw his deportation as an attempt by the state to 'ship away people it sees as a threat.'

The UCT Principal also registered a vigorous protest against Kaplan's deportation.

## Fort Hare rector expels 1 500 'terrorist' students

FORT HARE students and their parents have demanded that the university re-admit all expelled students unconditionally.

With the official expulsion figure at 1,500, the Soweto parent-student group has decided to seek a court interdict to reinstate the students and in Port Elizabeth parents have demanded the rector withdraws expulsion orders unconditionally and 'either readmits the students or resigns'.

The student protest at Fort Hare has left only a small number of students on campus.

One student harbouring in a neighbouring town after being expelled said reports from the campus showed less than 100 students at the most, and probably fewer, were still at Fort Hare. A lecturer described the number attending lectures as 'only a handful'.

The latest trouble at Fort Hare began when students refused to write tests because they were unable to study due to continual power failures in the hostels.

Since students returned to university in mid-July, there had been blackouts in most of the men's residences during the evenings.

On July 18 students held a mass meeting to discuss a draft constitution for an SRC. An interim committee was elected and mandated to go to admin to inform them of student dissatisfaction about the lighting situation.

At the end of July nothing had yet been done to correct the situation and students stormed 'Freedom Square', a courtyard with extensive lighting.

'How come is this electricity so available here when in our residences we are meant to study in the dark', said one student.

The rector reacted to the stoning by disbanding the interim SRC and suspending all discussions on the formation of an SRC.

A mass boycott of lectures by students followed and when an admin ultimatum to return to class or leave campus was not met, students were forced to leave by Ciskei police.

According to one student 'The rector refused to speak to students and called the police in immediately.'

The men were the first to be moved from the campus and then women were evicted. Some of them have returned home but many are staying in towns surrounding Alice.

In response to the rector's press statement blaming the events on a small group of activists, a student said: 'This is not true. Nothing was

being done about our grievances and students became very angry'.

Meanwhile protest by lecturers at the campus on the university authorities' handling of the issue is also mounting following the suspension of lecturer Jonathan Jackson.

Jackson had been held by Ciskei police after offering students a place to stay for the night after their dismissal. On his release, he had criticised the university for neglecting its responsibilities and leaving students stranded and hungry thousands of miles from their homes.

He was suspended by the rector Prof Lambrecht for violating the terms of his university contract by making a press statement.

On hearing of his suspension the Black Staff Association (BSA) released a statement supporting the views of Jackson and expressing anger if Jackson be suspended 'for speaking the truth'.

The day after releasing the statement, it was withdrawn because the university authorities ordered the BSA to retract it or face admin action. The rector said staff members who criticise the university would 'be brought to book' for 'working hand in glove with activist groups of terrorist students.'

At Turfloop students held a mass meeting in solidarity with Fort Hare students. A statement said, 'We note with disgust the high-handed and contemptuous action of the Fort Hare authorities in collusion with the Sebe regime in unjustly disrupting the studies of our brothers and sisters'.

## Spy testifies against Fine

IT WAS not necessarily unlawful to send information to the exiled South African Congress of Trade Unions. Major Craig Williamson of the Security Police told the Johannesburg Regional Court.

He was giving evidence in the trial of Alan Fine, 28, who is being charged under the Terrorism Act.

Fine is alleged to have sent information of trade unions to Sactu.

Williamson said Sactu was a genuine trade union federation 'but unfortunately had revolutionary aims.'

Major Arthur Conwright, head of John Vorster Square's investigation unit also gave evidence.

The trial continues.