

# STRIKES AND DISPUTES

## 12 September to 24 October

### National

Company	Union	Workers	Date	Details
Nampak	Ppwawu	3000	19 September	The central issue in this strike is Ppwawu's demand that Nampak management agree to centralised bargaining for the group instead of the present system in terms of which the union bargains at 40 individual plants. Other demands are that Nampak should pledge to help rebuild the defunct paper and printing industrial councils and institute a group-wide investigation into 'bugging' of union activities. Initially the strike involved workers at 19 plants, but it subsequently escalated to encompass 32 plants. Management's response to the strike has taken different forms. It has made applications in the industrial court and supreme court to interdict workers from striking. It has also withdrawn recognition agreements at several plants. And some 1 000 strikers had been dismissed at the time of going to press. On the union's side, several protests have been staged to reinforce the strikers demands. On 26 September some 200 workers demonstrated outside Nampak's Sandton head office. On 16 October some 5 000 people - including strikers, community members and students - marched from Alexandra township to the head office of Nampak's parent company, Barlow Rand. A march was also scheduled to take place in Cape Town on 25 October, after WIP went to press. The union has in addition requested the TUC and the Anti-Apartheid-Movement in Britain to put pressure on two supermarket chains - Asda and Sainsbury - not to purchase supplies from Nampak companies here. Cosatu has given the strike its full backing. On 22 October the federation announced that the strike would be a major focus of national protest action designed to press demands for centralised bargaining at Barlow Rand subsidiaries. Members of various Cosatu affiliates have also taken action in solidarity with the strikers: there have been petitions, workstoppages and blacking of Nampak companies.
Post Office	Potwa	22000	18 September	Postal workers staged sit-ins countrywide in rejection of the new Post Office Bill which makes provision for the Post Office to be split into separate postal and telecommunications divisions. According to Potwa, this amounts to an attempt at privatisation.
SA government	PSL	20000	16 October	Thousands of so-called coloured civil servants went on strike demanding a 20% wage increase and an end to job differentiation. Top-level talks between a senior official of the House of Representatives and government paymasters were scheduled to follow.

### Transvaal

ATC Brits	Numsa	600	14 July	As reported in WIP 69, this dispute started in May when the company dismissed six Numsa members, three of them shop stewards. In an effort to have them reinstated, workers began preparing for a legal strike. On 9 August, however, management obtained an industrial court order interdicting them from striking. On 14 August management instituted a lock-out. ATC subsequently proposed that the dismissals should be referred to arbitration. The company also agreed to negotiate a recognition agreement with the union.
Duvha colliery Witbank	Num	870	27 August 3 October	Workers embarked on a legal strike when management offered to increase wages by 14.5% in response to their demand for a 29% across-the-board increase. During mediation on 20 September workers revised their demand, asking for 15% increase instead. Management, however, refused to meet their demand. Thereafter, workers were issued with an ultimatum to return to work on 3 October or face dismissal. Management has since banned union meetings and ruled that workers may not wear union T-shirts.
Fosroc	CWIU	90	17 October	Workers struck demanding the reinstatement of a dismissed worker.
Home Care Potteries Vereeniging	Cawu	69	27 August	As reported in WIP 69, workers were locked out after going on strike because management hired casual workers a month after retrenching 33 of their fellow workers. The matter has now been referred to the industrial court.
Iscor Sishen, Thabazimbi Elisras	Num	5000	17 October	Mineworkers went on strike at 3 Iscor mines - the Thabazimbi and Sishen iron ore mines and Grootgaluk colliery at Elisras - following a breakdown in wage talks with management. Workers demanded a minimum monthly wage of R630, while management offered R560 a month. Other demands are for full-time shop stewards and 16 June and 21 March as paid holidays. At a meeting with management on 24 October Num proposed that the parties go to mediation to try to settle the dispute. Iscor has agreed in principle to this.
Kamillen Products Johannesburg	Sacwu	31	5 July 3 September	Workers went on strike when management offered a wage increase of R95 a month in response to their demands for: a R150 a month across-the-board increase; a 40-hour working week; a thirteenth cheque; and 21 March as a paid holiday. According to Sacwu, the action came after the company reneged on an agreement to allow union auditors to examine its books. The dispute was settled when workers accepted a wage increase of R90 per month from September to December followed by a R30 per month increase in January 1991 and a further R10 a month hike in September 1991.

Lebowa government Lebowakgomo	Notrapsw	16000	19 September 10 October	Lebowa's civil servants went on strike demanding recognition of their union, the Northern Transvaal Public Service Workers' Union (Notrapswu), permanent employment for casual labourers and an end to various forms of discrimination. The strike was characterised by high levels of violence, with several arson attacks on government buildings. Six executive members of the union were detained during the action. The strike was resolved on 9 October after negotiations between the bantustan government, Notrapswu and Cosatu. The government undertook to negotiate a recognition agreement with the union and granted Cosatu permission to hold a rally at Lebowakgomo on 21 October to report on the settlement. In return, Cosatu and the union made a pledge not to call for any strikes, boycotts or other actions in the region while negotiations with the government are underway. The detainees were released after talks between Notrapswu and the police.
Lichtenburg m'pality	Nups	108	27 September	The workers, who earn between R200 and R300 a month, downed tools demanding a minimum monthly wage of R520 and recognition of Nups. Management held talks with the union the same day and indicated that they would consider the wage demand. When the union representatives went to report back, however they found that the workers had already been served with dismissal notices. The union has declared a dispute and applied for a conciliation board.
Matia Colliery	Num	860	22 October	Mineworkers went on a one-day strike when management decided to take disciplinary action against 40 of their workmates for Witbank 23 October using changehouses allocated for skilled workers. The action of the 40 formed part of Num's defiance campaign to end racist practices on the mines. The strikers insisted that the 40 should not be singled out and that management should rather take action against all of them. The dispute was resolved when management agreed not to institute disciplinary action against the 40 in return for an undertaking from workers not to use changerooms for skilled workers.
Meyerton m'pality	MSFAWU	202	30 July	As reported in WIP 69, workers downed tools after the council offered to increase wages by R395 a month in response to their Meyerton demand for an increase of R800 across the board. On 1 August they were all dismissed. The council has since offered to re-employ 89 of the strikers but has refused to do the same for the others, saying their posts have been made redundant. The dispute has been referred to the relevant industrial council.
Motovia	TGWU	94	27 September	The workers, who are long distance drivers, went on strike in protest against long working hours and the company's decision West Wood to withdraw travel allowances. A third demand was for the reinstatement of a dismissed workmate. According to TGWU, workers are expected to work 24 hours a day when on duty. To back their demand, workers embarked on an overtime ban, knocking off at 5pm every day. On 27 September management obtained a court order interdicting workers from continuing with the overtime ban. Workers, however, defied the order. On 28 September they were all dismissed. Management subsequently offered to re-employ the workers provided they signed short-term contracts. Workers rejected this saying the issue of short-term contracts should be discussed with the union at national level.
Pact	PPWAWU	270	25 September	Workers downed tools demanding an audience with Pact deputy general director Louis Bezuidenhout after a report-back by Ppwawu Pretoria shop stewards on talks with management over stop order facilities. The union had for several months been demanding that Pact deduct union dues from members' pay packets. Pact's response was that it was locked into an agreement with another union and was awaiting an exemption from the relevant industrial council. All the workers were dismissed less than two hours after the start of the work stoppage.
Pietersburg Hospital	Nehawu	300	27 September 28 September	Workers staged a work stoppage after a white wage clerk was racially abusive to a worker. The worker, who had been queuing for pay, left the queue to go to the toilet. When she returned, the clerk accused her of jumping the queue. The workers demanded that the clerk apologise publicly. They resumed work after management forced the clerk to accede to their demand.
Post office, Joh'burg	Potwa	100	2 October	The workers, who live in post office houses in Molapovilla in Soweto, staged a demonstration outside Jeppe Street post office.
Potgieters Transport Lichtenburg	TGWU	38	4 September	Workers went on strike demanding recognition of TGWU and the reinstatement of 5 workers who were dismissed because they had joined the union. A third grievance was the company's decision to withdraw 7 workers' company cars. Management agreed to reinstate 4 of the dismissed workers, but refused to do the same for the fifth, or to accede to the strikers' other demands. All the strikers were dismissed on 4 September. The union then made an application in the industrial court to have them reinstated under section 43 of the LRA. The application was, however, refused on the grounds that the strike was illegal.
Pretoria Glass	CWIU	52	9 July	As reported in WIP 69, workers at Pretoria Glass & Aluminium went on strike in protest against the dismissal of a fellow Pretoria worker. All were on 16 July. Management has since re-employed 17 of the strikers. The union is fighting the dismissals in the industrial court.
Reckitt & Coleman	CWIU	350	29 May	As reported in WIP 69, workers embarked on a legal strike in an effort to force the company to participate in the Chemical Elandsfontein Industries' National Provident Fund and were all dismissed at the end of June. In response, the union called for a consumer boycott of the company's products. A conciliation board hearing on 19 October failed to resolve the dispute. A continuation of the consumer boycott is under consideration.

Samancor Witbank	Numsa	2000	30 August 19 September	Workers embarked on a legal strike when management offered to increase wages by 15% in response to their demand for increases of between 15% and 36%. The dispute was settled when workers accepted an offer for a 16% increase which raises wages for Meyerton unskilled workers to R4.55/hour and to R10.92/hour for skilled employees. Other improvements include time off for shop steward training and an undertaking by management to abide by job security clauses in the Main Agreement for the metal industry.
SAMIEA	Numsa	30	11 October	Some 30 Numsa shop stewards, who represents 60 000 union members, staged a sit-in at the Pretoria office of the SA Motor Industry Employers' Association (SAMIEA) to back wage demands currently being negotiated by the union and the employer body. Workers are demanding R4.50 an hour. Management is offering R2.50 an hour.
Sigma Colliery Sasolburg	Sacwu	2000	29 August 20 September	Workers at this Sasol mine went on strike when negotiations on wages and working conditions broke down. Workers were demanding a minimum wage of R1 299 a month; a R400 across-the-board increase; more paid holidays; an improved shift allowance and reduced hours of work. The colliery had offered to increase the minimum wage by between 20% and 30% (which would have brought the minimum wage for underground employees to R500 a month and R454 a month for surface employees) and to increase the number of statutory paid holidays from 7 to 8. On 3 September 8 union members were arrested, charged with malicious damage to property and allowed bail of R200. On 13 September all strikers were dismissed. The dispute was resolved after mediation by IMSSA. The union settled on a 30% increase which raises the minimum for underground workers to R150 a month and for surface workers to R469 a month.
Zebediela Citrus Pietersburg	NUFW	1500	8 August	As reported in WIP 69, workers at this state-owned farm went on strike demanding a 50% increase and a minimum wage of R400 a month as well as recognition of NUFW. On 8 and 9 October the strikers were evicted from their quarters by Lebowa police in terms of a court order obtained by management. The farm's security personnel, whom the strikers had accused of harassing them, and who live in mud huts on the estate, then moved into the quarters. On 12 October the magistrate who had sanctioned the eviction of the strikers rescinded the court order. This meant that the strikers could re-occupy their quarters. However, the security guards refused to move out and on 15 October went on strike themselves. Nactu has threatened to call a national stayaway over the dispute.

#### OFS

OwaQwa government OwaQwa	Nehawu	8000	17 September	Civil servants went on a one-day strike over the arrest the previous day of 10 Nehawu officials who had staged a seven-day sit-in at the bantustan government's offices after the government reneged on an undertaking to discuss the summary dismissal of 528 workers. The officials were charged with trespassing.
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#### Natal

Indian Ocean Fertilizer	CWIU	250	13 August	As reported in WIP 69, management imposed a lock-out after workers voiced their dissatisfaction with wages and working conditions. Mediation on the dispute took place on 1 November, but the outcome was not known at the time WIP went to press.
Mainline Carriers	TGWU	150	23 September	Workers went on strike demanding the reinstatement of a senior shop steward who had been dismissed. Management responded by dismissing them all. In subsequent negotiations with the union, management offered to reinstate 63 workers but not the rest. The union rejected the offer. Talks are continuing.
Nicholas Kiwi	CWIU	80	23 October	Workers went on strike demanding the dismissal of a supervisor who had been rude.

#### Cape

Cape Electric Lamp Port Elizabeth	CWIU	100	10 September	Workers at Electric Lamp Manufacturers staged a sit-in following a deadlock in wage talks. On 13 September management obtained a court order interdicting them from being on the premises. The workers, however, refused to leave. They were evicted by police on 14 September.
Ellerines	Saccawu	100	17 September	Workers at seven stores in the Ellerines group embarked on a strike demanding the reinstatement of 2 dismissed colleagues. It Port Elizabeth was later announced that negotiations with management were underway.
Mercedes-Benz SA East London	Numsa	200	16 August 8 October	This strike began when a group of employees opposed to the National Bargaining Forum (NBF) - a body established last year at Numsa's request as a forum for negotiating wages and working conditions at 6 motor manufacturers - downed tools demanding that management negotiate these issues at plant level. They did so because they believed they could get a better deal that way as Mercedes pays more than the other manufacturers. The workers then occupied the factory. On 10 August management obtained a court interdict ordering the strikers to leave the plant. The order was not heeded. On 21 August Mercedes announced that they had been dismissed. On 2 September police evicted them. The company thereafter announced that production would not resume until: damage to the plant had been assessed and repaired; Numsa gave assurances that the problems over the NBF had

				been resolved; Numsa satisfied management that workers would abide by the terms of their employment contracts and any other agreements between the union and the company; and both the union and the company agreed on a practical process to remove problems that affect the company's growth and viability. Agreement on these issues was reached in late September. Numsa also confirmed that workers had agreed to accept the wage agreement concluded at the NBF. Production resumed on 3 October. The dismissal of 538 workers during the strike has been referred to arbitration.
Rocklands Poultry Uitenhage	Fawu	200	21 August	Just under 200 workers were dismissed on 21 August when they refused to heed an order to return to work following sporadic industrial action flowing from a dispute between Fawu and the company over several issues, including wages and the employment of casual workers on a permanent basis. After the dismissals the workers occupied the plant. On 22 August the company obtained an urgent supreme court interdict, ordering them to leave. Fawu says the dismissals constitute an unfair labour practice and is taking up the matter in the industrial court as well as rallying community support for the workers.

#### Ciskei

Ronber Pharmaceuticals Dimbaza	CWIU	36	14 August	As reported in <i>WIP 69</i> , workers went on strike demanding recognition of CWIU and were dismissed on 17 August. Ten of the Dimbaza workers have since been re-employed. The union has applied for a conciliation board to determine the fate of the remaining 26 workers.
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#### Transkei

TRTC Butterworth	TGWU	2000	6 August	This dispute began on 3 August when workers at Transkei Road Transport Corporation's Butterworth depot downed tools demanding an explanation for the suspension over the past month of 57 of their workmates. Management refused to accede to the demand Umtata and later called in the police to act as mediators. In the interim, however, news of the dispute reached workers at the corporation's Umtata depot. They demanded a meeting with management to discuss events at Butterworth. On 6 August 400 Umtata depot workers downed tools and forced management to talk to them by locking the depot gate. One member of management did, however, manage to leave the depot. He summoned the police. On 7 August police called in the Transkei army to run the depot. Management also obtained an urgent court order interdicting the Umtata depot workers from disrupting operations at the depot or molesting or intimidating those who wanted to work. On 8 August the court order was extended to cover all TRTC depots in the bantustan and the army took responsibility for running all services. A hearing to determine whether the interim interdict should be made a permanent order was set down for 6 September. There have, however, been several postponements and the matter was due to be heard on 11 November. Management has refused to have any dealings with TGWU throughout the dispute. Eight shop stewards from the Umtata depot, who were detained after 7 August under Transkei's equivalent of section 29 of the Internal Security Act, were released in mid-October.
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