

Henkel boycott called

STOP PRESS: agreement reached with Henkel. Boycott off.

THE Chemical Workers' Industrial Union (CWIU) has called for a boycott of all products manufactured by the Henkel company.

The call has come after a long struggle against Henkel management which recently culminated in many union members losing their jobs.

The union has been battling against Henkel management for the past four years. Last month, Durban workers finally downed tools after the company once again broke off negotiations with the union.

PRESIDENT FIRED

All the workers were fired and management refused to reinstate many workers, including all the union shop stewards. Among them is Abe Cwele, president of the CWIU and a member of Fosatu's Natal Regional Council.

A union spokesman has said: "We have called for the boycott because all attempts to negotiate with Henkel have failed.

"We believe that Henkel deliberately provoked the strike in order to get rid of the union in the plant. This has also allowed it to introduce harsher working conditions, such as increasing shift workers' hours from 40 to 45."

Henkel is a German firm and the boycott has already received widespread support overseas. The International Chemical and Energy Workers' Federation (ICEF), consisting of six million workers, has

pledged its support to Henkel workers and the boycott of Henkel products. shop stewards and workers in all regions to distribute them as widely as possible.

The Products union has called for a boycott of the following products: **WASHING POWDERS:** White Giant, X-tra, Country Pride, Dato. **GLUE:** Pritt Stick, Pattex, Ponal, Klerfix. **DISHWASHERS:** Swift, Dixie Sparkle, Blitz, Klenz.

The union has also called on workers to watch out for a new range of Henkel toilet goods which will be in the shops soon, with the brand name of KHASANA.

Congress warns Rembrandt

FOSATU has condemned the Henkel company's anti-union policies and actions and has given its full support to the consumer boycott of Henkel products called by the Chemical Workers' Industrial Union (CWIU).

In a resolution adopted at its second national congress in Hammanskraal, Fosatu also voted to extend the boycott to products of the Rembrandt cigarette company — which owns a share in Henkel — if the dispute is not resolved within a reasonable period of time.

The congress authorised the Natal region — in which the Henkel



Beat the White Giant! Delegates at Fosatu's second national congress with a Henkel boycott banner.

factory falls, to extend the boycott to Rembrandt products on behalf of Fosatu if this should become necessary.

REASONS

Setting out the reasons for its decisions, congress noted: four years to get a recognition agreement from Henkel and that the company has consistently refused to negotiate an agreement.

- that Henkel has consistently refused to negotiate wages and working conditions with the union
- that Henkel refused to negotiate the pensions issue

- that it has attempted to lengthen the working week and reduce shift pay and overtime pay
- that Henkel provoked a strike on these issues, quickly fired 230 workers and employed non-union scab labour at worse conditions of employment
- that it refused to re-employ 140 workers who wanted to return to work.

BACKGROUND

Setting out the background to the dispute, Charles Ngema, general secretary of the CWIU told congress that Henkel refused to negotiate in

good faith with the union and has avoided recognising the union.

"We feel management deliberately tried to provoke the strike in order to undermine the union's influence in the plant — and it succeeded," he said.

After workers had gone on strike, management set a deadline of 11 am when all workers still on strike "would have dismissed themselves".

'REFUSED TO TALK'

"The company agreed to meet a union delegation to discuss the situation. But we had a long way to travel and when we got there just after 11 o'clock, management refused to talk to us and dismissed all the workers," he said.

Alec Erwin of NUTW said the boycott was a good step and would warn employers that it could not deal so lightly with workers.

Breakthrough at Noodsberg

DESPITE the hostile attitudes of several companies in the Pietermaritzburg area, some important gains have been made by several Fosatu unions.

The Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) and the Sweet, Food and Allied Workers' Union (SFAWU) have won several agreements from employers which grant important new rights to workers in the area.

Recently, MAWU signed an agreement with APV Kestner, and is negotiating three other agreements in the area.

Still more important is SFAWU's

agreement with Noodsberg Sugar. This was signed on February 28 this year, after seven months of tough negotiations.

The sugar industry is dominated by two giant companies — Hulett's, which is controlled by Anglo American, and C.G. Smith, which owns Noodsberg Sugar and is a member of the Barlow-Rand group.

Both C.G. Smith and Hulett's have refused to negotiate wages and working conditions outside of Industrial Councils.

Noodsberg is not covered by an industrial council agreement, but the company insisted that the

SFAWU should apply for membership of the Industrial Council and that it should be extended to cover Noodsberg.

The union refused, and despite great company pressure on the union eventually persuaded Noodsberg to accept the negotiation of wages and working conditions at plant level.

'MAJOR VICTORY'

"This is a major victory," says Jay Naidoo, Pietermaritzburg organiser for the SFAWU. But we still have a long way to go." Managements at the other mills where we are organising are still demanding that the union should join the Industrial Council and sit alongside Sibande's Sugar Manufacturing and Refining Employees' Union.

"Our members refuse to do this. The inadequacy of the present Industrial Council system was recently once again demonstrated to them by the ridiculously low wage increase of 18 percent that Sibande's union negotiated on the council.

"We prefer to negotiate at plant level and to demand a living wage, not just minimum wages.

"This is exactly what we are doing at Noodsberg."

"We anticipate major problems in our negotiations at Noodsberg mainly because the unions on the Sugar Industrial Council have accepted the 18 percent increase. However we are making massive strides in the sugar industry and are hopeful that new and moderate platforms for plant level and industry wide bargaining will emerge."

Union Co-operative case:

'The law is on the bosses' side'

RENEWED questions have been raised about the role of the courts in relation to worker issues by a judgement affecting workers at the Union Co-operative sugar mill in Natal who were evicted from their hostels after a dispute at the plant last year.

In the judgment, Judge Booysens said he believed the workers were untruthful and that the company was right to use whatever means, including force, to evict the workers from the hostel.

The dispute started early last year when the company, together with other companies in the sugar industry, increased wages by 17 percent.

But unlike other employers, they withdrew free rations at the same time. Workers argued that the company had taken back with the one hand what it had given with the other, and that their conditions of work had been illegally changed.

WORKERS EVICTED

They therefore stopped work. Police

Stop-order facilities were also withdrawn.

AGGETT STOPPAGE

Other companies, including Prestige, have also hardened their attitude towards the unions. Management's hostility seems to have been strengthened even more by the stoppage on February 11 to mourn the death of trade unionist Neil Aggett in detention.

It is rumoured that the Natal Chamber of Industries has vowed to oppose any such future stoppage from the beginning.

But John Makhatini, MAWU organiser in Maritzburg, says "These attacks have only made the unions more determined.

"The union is prepared to take the consequences and intends reinforcing its power in the different factories in the area to make managements negotiate."

were called in and the workers were evicted from the hostels and arrested for trespassing.

The Sweet, Food and Allied Workers' Union (SFAWU) challenged this action in court, saying the employers had no right to throw the workers out of hostel rooms for which they have paid, without notice.

An initial victory was won when Judge Page re-instated Cyprian Ngewu in the hostel in April last year. The case of 49 other workers dragged on until Judge Booysens recently found in another judgment that:

- the workers' evidence was untruthful
- the management was entitled to dismiss the workers because they had struck illegally
- the workers never wanted to go back to the hostels
- the police were entitled to arrest workers for trespassing
- even if the workers left due to the threat of being arrested by the police, the company was justified in using whatever means it chose to remove them from the hostel, he said.

SERIOUS SETBACK

According to the SFAWU, the decision is a serious setback for migrant workers all over South Africa.

If the case had been won, it would have set a major precedent in law and would have forced all employers to get court orders first before evicting workers.

It confirms, the union says, what workers have always known — that the law is generally on management's side.

Maritzburg managers take hard line

workers downed tools. The company still refused to negotiate and insisted that workers resign if they wanted their pension money paid out — which they did.

The company then refused to reinstate them and 500 fellow workers stopped work for five days.

They returned on the 19th after Hulett's threatened to dismiss them, but the company then refused to take back 218 union members. Over 180 workers, including the entire union steering committee, have still not been re-employed.

Since this strike, several managements in Maritzburg and the

surrounding areas have followed the hard line taken by Hulett's, which is mostly owned by the Anglo-American Corporation.

POLICE CALLED

Union officials were ordered out of the factory at a wage dispute at McKinnon Chain in February this year. Police were called in and workers were told to start work in fifteen minutes — or be removed from the factory by force.

This eventually happened and the next day the company only agreed to re-employ workers if they agreed not to take part in union activities.

NAAWU honours leader

BROTHER Arthur van Wyk, who recently retired from General Motors after 25 years service, was presented with an honorarium at a meeting of NAAWU's National Executive Council in March.

Bro. van Wyk was a founder member of NAAWU and moved up from being a shop steward to becoming a member of the National Executive Council.

He also served on the union's Benevolent Fund Committee.

SINCE the stoppage at Hulett's Aluminium over the pensions issue last year, relations between Fosatu unions and several companies in the Maritzburg area have reached a new low.

The Metal Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) says there are signs that some companies have deliberately tried to crush worker organisation in the area.

The conflict at Hulett's Aluminium started on October 12 last year. MAWU had been struggling to win recognition in the plant for nine years but had still not succeeded — even though other minority race groups had recognised unions in the plant.

DOWNED TOOLS

The dispute broke out when workers demanded that their pension contributions be refunded. Management refused and on October 12 about 120