



NAAWU VICTIMISATION OF UNION ACTIVISTS

LEADS TO COURT CASE

FOLLOWING Alfa's refusal to deal with the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union and its dismissal of three union activists, the union has launched an urgent application to the Industrial Court.

In its application, NAAWU has asked the court to order the reinstatement of its victimised members and to restrain Alfa from imposing a works council on the workforce.

NAAWU has also demanded that Alfa recognise the union as representative of its employees at the Wynburg depot.

Alfa has responded by alleging that the union has no right to represent its members in court and that the union has itself committed an unfair labour practice by committing itself to strive for democratic, non-racial trade unions.

The company also alleges that it is not obliged to recognise the union at its plant and that it is not obliged to consult worker representatives or workers themselves prior to retrenchment.

Alfa claims that the workers have chosen to be represented by a works council and that it had good cause to retrench the workers.

A NAAWU spokesperson said that as well as the court case, the union had used its fraternal links with the Italian metal unions as it was believed that a joint effort could force the company to open negotiations with NAAWU.

PAPER WORKERS HOLD SIT-IN

ABOUT 400 workers at Carlton Paper in Wadeville recently staged a sit-in as management had refused to pay any attention to their grievances.

The workers from all the six shifts came to the canteen at 6 am on April 13 and refused to budge until management had dealt with their fourteen demands.

UNDERTOOK

By lunchtime the company had given a written undertaking to:

- * reinstate a dismissed worker
- * provide back pay for a worker whose wages had been cut months before
- * provide safety boots for workers
- * to give all workers, including shift workers, paid tea break - in terms of the Industrial Council agreement there is no set tea break for shift workers
- * pay out pension money within three weeks of leaving the firm instead of the previous six months.

With this written undertaking the workers went back to work and a committee of 20 was set up to negotiate on the other grievances.

PAID

All the day shift workers were paid for time spent not working during the sit-in and night shift workers who had come in specially were paid half their wages.

One shop steward said after the sit-in that the workers had been complaining for months about certain problems but the manager did nothing.

'It took the united action by workers to wake management up and to realise that workers were right', the shop steward said.

Sweet Unions merge to form National Union

THE Eastern Province Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union has merged with the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union in order to form a broad national based union.

The EPSFAWU developed under the wing of the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union prior to the formation of FOSATU. The union has recruited more than 500 members at the Cadbury's factory in the Eastern Cape.

Eastern Province regional secretary, Les Kettleidas said that becoming part of a broader based union would improve the resources of this small union and would provide a basis for further expansion.

NEW SUGAR INDUSTRY NEGOTIATING GROUP

A NEW negotiating committee has been established in the sugar industry in Natal giving the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union a firm foot hold in the industry.

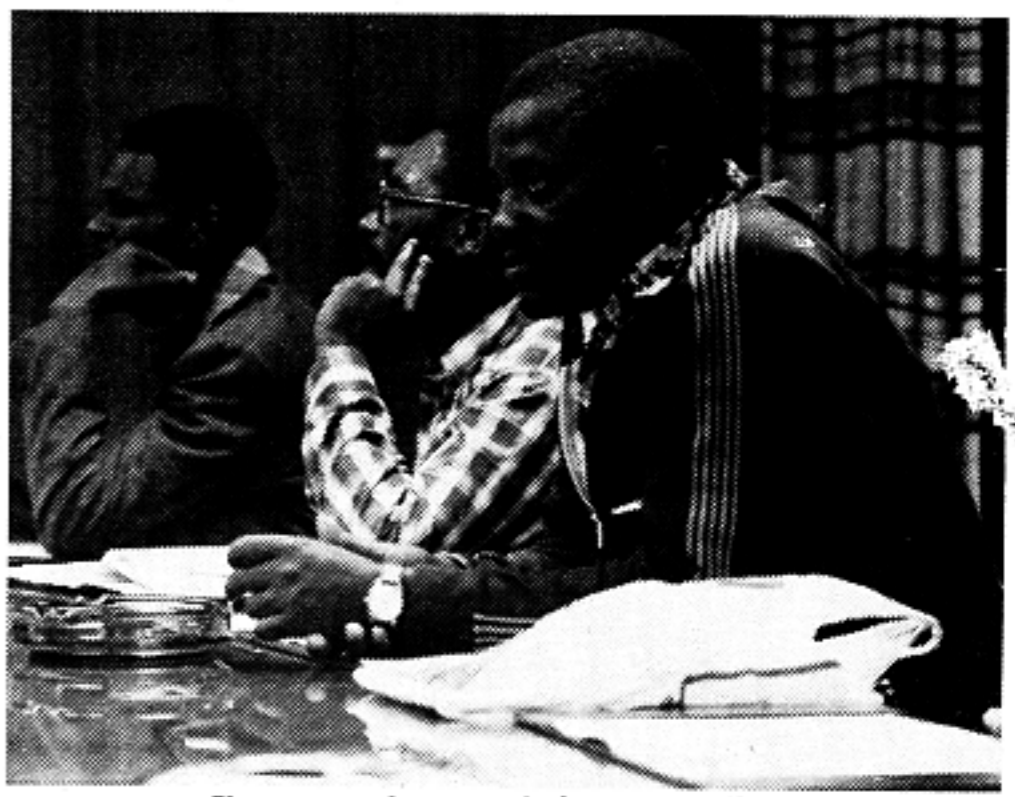
The negotiating group which highlights the importance of worker involvement in bargaining structures and of worker mandates, was set up to negotiate wages and working conditions covering any CG Smith Mill where the SFAWU has a majority.

In terms of an agreement between sugar company, CG Smith and the union, it was agreed to establish this new bargaining forum outside of the industrial council. It consists of six shop stewards for every mill where the SFAWU has a majority, three union officials and management representatives.

The agreement marks an important victory for SFAWU against employers who have refused to negotiate with the union outside the Industrial Council.

A SFAWU representative said the union had refused to join the council at this stage because its present structures did not allow for the involvement of workers in negotiations nor did it allow for the establishing of factory floor organisation.

The importance of worker involvement in bargaining has been underlined in a wage agreement just completed by the new negotiating committee with CG Smith.



Shop stewards caucus before wage talks.

The new committee negotiated a 13 per cent increase for the lowest grades and a 7,5 per cent increase for the highest grades, whereas the secretary of the National Union of Sugar Manufacturing and Refining Employees, Selby Nsibande - who sits on the council - agreed to a 7,5 per cent increase across the board.

Nsibande also agreed to incorporate the food ration into the wage increase in spite of the fact that this sensitive issue led to mass strikes by angry sugar workers last year.

Brother Belford Jila, the chairman of the Noodsberg shop stewards committee, said it was quite clear that Nsibande had reached this agreement with no consultation with his members.

The SFAWU negotiators won a R50 food ration for the Noodsberg mill and a R45 for the Umzimkulu mill.

The new negotiating committee at present represents about 1 000 workers at the Umzimkulu and Noodsberg mills but plans to use its position as a springboard into the rest of the sugar industry.

Workers should control Metal Pension Fund - says MAWU

THE Metal and Allied Workers Union is pushing for worker control of the multi-million Rand metal industries' pension fund.

The fund to which more than 450 000 workers contribute contained 586 million Rand at the end of last year and at present is controlled by a board dominated by management representatives.

MAWU's general secretary, David Sebabi said that it was crucial that the workers who are members of the fund should be able to control the fund.

Workers would then be able to make the changes to the fund

that they wanted, he added.

At a meeting with the employers association, SEIFSA, on April 12 MAWU argued that the unions with the most members in the fund should have the most seats on the controlling board and that employers should have less than half the seats on this board.

SEIFSA said they would never accept less than half the seats on the fund as they said they paid half the money into the fund.

In reply, MAWU said this was nonsense as it was workers' money in that fund and workers should be able to control that

money.

The Council of Mining and Building Unions supported SEIFSA saying that they needed the help and the experience of the employers. Besides, they said, workers would be unhappy if the fund were not continued.

Once again, MAWU attacked this by saying that many workers wanted their money back from the fund.

Eventually it was agreed to hold another meeting on May 27 to allow MAWU, the Chemical Workers Industrial Union and the General Workers Union to discuss this matter with the controlling board of the fund.

METAL WORKERS CALL FOR R90 A WEEK

METAL workers at general meetings held on the Reef and in Durban over the past month have launched a call for a minimum wage of R90 a week.

Besides this, the workers have demanded an R18 a week across the board increase and 'in order to fight the growing problem of unemployment and starvation', they have demanded that the working week be reduced to 40 hours with no loss of wages and that overtime be banned during times of retrenchment.

The general meetings were called to discuss the demands to be put forward by MAWU during the negotiations at the metal industries' industrial council.

SPEEDED UP PRODUCTION

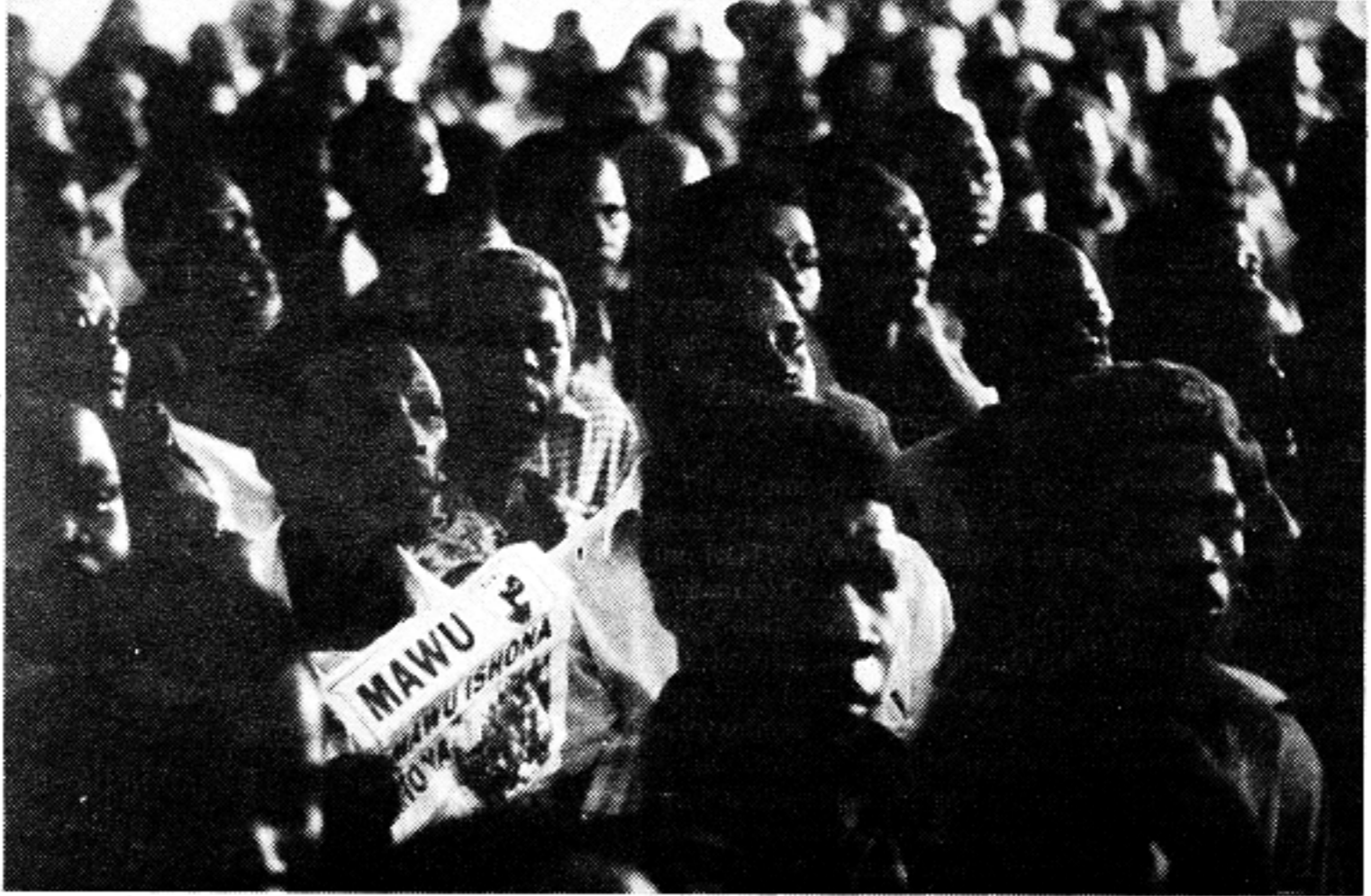
Workers at the meetings said they had noticed that management in many factories had already speeded up production with fewer workers and was talking about higher efficiency and 'getting rid of the dead wood'.

They said they knew that management would not try to rehire workers when the economy improved as after the last economic slump companies had tried to get the remaining workers to do more work for the same wages.

COLLECTIVE STRENGTH

At the general meeting held in Durban, MAWU's president Jeffrey Vilane said 'We can see clearly that the time has come to use our collective strength to push workers demands in the industry.'

'For too long workers real interests have been ignored at the factory level, we cannot allow this situation to continue', he said.



Metal workers crammed into Bolton Hall for the Durban meeting