

Metal workers push for higher wages after IC sell out

METAL workers throughout the country are pushing for higher wages.

The wage settlement reached by 'sell out' unions and the employers' association, SEIFSA, on the Industrial Council has left them totally dissatisfied.

And the battleground has now moved from the Industrial Council to the factory floor as Metal and Allied Workers Union members push their employers to better the 'appalling' Industrial Council increases.

The Industrial Council settled on a 10c increase in spite of massive opposition from MAWU which said its members would not be satisfied with anything less than an across the board increase of R18 a week.

Over the past month the tension has been building up in many factories as employers refuse to remedy the low Industrial Council wage increase.

And already at three major Barlows factories, workers have downed tools in support of their wage demand.

The Barlows Shop Stewards Council agreed that they would push for an increase of 50c an hour - so with this they approached their employers.

The Barlows Manufacturing plant at Kew near Johannesburg and WB Camerons in Jacobs near Durban were the first factories to strike in support of wage demands.

At both factories, management refused to talk wages until recognition agreements had been signed with the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

Barlows' Fuchs plant at Alrode soon joined these two factories after their management also used an unsigned recognition agreement as an excuse not to negotiate wages.

Although, workers at all three factories eventually returned to work, they were clearly not satisfied with Barlows' 'delaying tactics'.

However, at Barlows Kew management added fuel to the discontent by firing 12 workers who, they claimed, had been beating up fellow workers during the strike.

But not all metal workers have been unsuccessful in their drive for higher wages.

Factory level negotiations have

led to increases at:

* APV Kestner (Pietermaritzburg) - 18 percent across the board.

* Pillar Naco (Pietermaritzburg) - 15 percent across the board.

* Glacier Bearings (Pinetown) R2 per hour and 16 percent across the board.

* Forbo Krommenie (Jacobs) minimum wage R2,42 and an across the board increase of 30 percent.

* CI Industries (Pinetown) - 25 percent across the board.

* Instep Components - minimum wages raised by 17 percent.

* Alusaf (Richards Bay) minimum wages raised to R1,58 per hour.

And a new wage agreement has been reached to cover four Henred Freuhauf factories - two in Natal and two in the

Transvaal.

This is the first time that a wage agreement has been signed covering an Isithebe factory - Isithebe is a 'border' industrial area near Mandini and well known for its 'poverty' wages.

Workers at the four factories will get a 19c an hour increase

backdated to July and will get a further 5c an hour increase in January.

In order to start closing the wage gap between the Isithebe factory and the others, the company agreed to a further 4c an hour in July and 3c in January for the Isithebe workers.

Shop steward chairman returns to Ponds

THE chairman of the shop stewards committee at Wadeville factory, Chesebrough Ponds, who was fired after the June 16 stay-away, has been taken back.

On June 16, workers at this Transvaal factory decided not to go to work in remembrance of the 1976 uprising.

However, after the stay-away management fired the shop stewards' chairman, Morgan Mathebula, for supposedly inciting workers to strike by announcing the stay-away on the public address system.

At this, workers stopped work in protest saying that the decision to stay-away had not been made by Brother Mathebula but had been made at a general meeting.

They said that management had told shop stewards that if workers do not work on June 16 they would lose a day's pay.

After the short stoppage workers returned to work in order to give shop stewards the chance to appeal against the decision to fire Brother Mathebula.

Appeals, negotiations with the union and mediation failed to resolve the dispute.

But the Chemical Workers Industrial Union said 'we will fight the case until the end of time if need be.'

'We cannot allow management to dismiss the chairman of the shop stewards committee when the workers themselves had taken the decision not to work on June 16,' the union said.

Finally, after further talks, management agreed that Brother Mathebula could return to work.



Shop stewards at Barlows' Fuchs plant report back to workers during their short stoppage. Workers at this meeting voted to return to work.

Mondi Paper backs down

THE Mondi Paper Company has backed down on its earlier refusal to start negotiating a recognition agreement covering its Merebank mill.

This follows what appears to be a clear attempt by Mondi to block the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union from representing its members at this mill near Durban.

Refused

Mondi had initially refused to negotiate an agreement saying it would first have to complete the recognition agreement presently being negotiated with PWAU to cover the Felixton mill.

In the meantime PWAU said senior management attempted to persuade members not to belong to the union.

'Indian members were told that Mondi was disappointed in them for joining the union.'

Jobs taken

And others were told that by joining a FOSATU union their jobs would eventually be taken by black workers as FOSATU unions were for blacks only.'

PWAU organiser, Pat Horn said.

'Some members were actually threatened that they would lose their jobs through having joined the union,' she added.

Resigned

However, in spite of these actions membership at the mill continued to grow and more than 900 workers have thus far joined the union.

About 70 of these have resigned from the SA Boilermakers Society to join PWAU.

A worker said 'the Boilermakers Union is an insurance union. We want a fighting union.'

Furious

At a meeting at the beginning of July, Mondi refused to recognise even an interim shop stewards committee and proposed that a new works council be elected.

PWAU members were furious at this and said they did not see why they had to wait for the Felixton agreement.

'We have had majority memb-

ership at the plant for two months. This is just blackmail,' they said.

The union decided that Mondi's actions amounted to an unfair labour practice and informed the company that if it did not open talks with PWAU

within two weeks it would take Mondi to the Industrial Court.

Minutes before this deadline was due to expire, Mondi informed the union that it would open recognition talks and would recognise the union's shop stewards.

TGWU signs first agreement with transport company

THE Transport and General Workers Union has signed its first agreement with a goods transport company.

The preliminary recognition agreement covers Freight Air and Freight Services Forwarding.

It is believed to be the first agreement signed between a goods transportation company and an independent union.

TGWU general secretary, Jane Barrett said they had been having a tough time with the 'hard headed' transport employers association.

'Particularly as it has used the parallel TUCSA union, the African Transport Union, as an excuse not to deal with TGWU. But we hope this agreement will open the way for more to follow.'

The TGWU has also been breaking new ground in the property industry.

It has signed an agreement with Anglo Property Services covering about 600 workers at various grand buildings around Johannesburg - including the giant Carlton Centre.