

NAAWU slams employers' plan to 'erode' wages

THE National Automobile and Allied Workers Union has attacked the Eastern Province Automobile Employers' Association for its attempts to 'erode' workers' wages.

And in protest at the employers' measly offer of an increase of 5c on the bottom grade and 11c on the top grade, workers at all General Motors plants downed tools for fifteen minutes on July 29.

This action comes as once again the employers and NAAWU begin wage talks on an interim wage increase.

But the action of the employers is already driving the talks fast towards a deadlock.

Last year's wage talk deadlock led to a mass strike involving more than 10000 motor workers.

In terms of the agreement reached close to the end of last year, it was agreed that further wage talks would be held every six months to discuss an interim wage increase.

However, EPAMA has already tried to squeeze out of this by asking the union to defer wage talks until the last quarter of

the year 'in view of the economic downturn'.

NAAWU rejected this excuse outright and said that EPAMA's action was in breach of the agreement.

And eventually when the employers were hauled to the negotiating table by the union, they continued to 'plead poverty' and proposed that the wage adjustment only be made in December.

EPAMA said that if the union 'insisted' on wage increases from August 1, the employers could only offer 5c - 11c. This

amounts to only half of the cost of living increase over the last six months.

NAAWU said this was 'totally unacceptable' as the employers should at least meet the cost of living increase. This would mean an increase of 16c on the bottom grades to 34c on the top.

Regional secretary, Les Kettleidas said workers' wages had already been hit by the fact that most of them were working short time.

'And now on top of this employers want to erode their wages,' he said.

The increase, if deferred, will undercut the workers' present wages by 5 percent and will save employers R1,7 million.

Brother Kettleidas said this would not only effect motor workers but would have a dire effect on the whole Port Elizabeth area where this money would be spent on other products.

STOP PRESS: As we went to press, a meeting of all the shop stewards rejected the employers' offer and it was decided to call meetings of all the workers in order to get a mandate.

Union drive in P.E. gets 21 workers city rights

TWENTY-ONE contract workers at Timber Industries in Port Elizabeth have been given permanent city rights after an active union campaign in the factory.

This follows the historic Rikhotso judgement in which the highest court in the land ruled that migrant workers who had worked for one employer for more than 10 years had the right to Section 10 1(b).

Documents

Since the judgement many FOSATU unions have been pushing employers to assist in getting their contract workers urban rights.

At Timber Industries, Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union organiser, Lucky Dendile, asked the company to provide the names of the people who had worked for the company for more than 10 years and asked that it provide the documents necessary to apply for city rights.

Out of the 23 who applied, 21 were recently given their Section 10 1 (b) stamps.

Campaign

On a much larger scale, a similar campaign has been conducted by the National Union of Textile Workers at Mooi River Textiles in Natal.

There it appears that about 300 workers qualify for permanent rights.

The company has been asked to prepare the necessary documents and the union is presently awaiting the results of the applications to the Administration Board.

'Useless' union kicked out

IF you were a member of a union that for the past thirty years had done nothing for you. What would you do?

Kick it out? Well that's exactly what workers at Shatterproof at Port Elizabeth have done.

In an interview with FOSATU Worker News, the steering committee said they knew the Glass Workers Union was there, but they did not know what it was for.

'The workers have no say in the union. We don't even know how the office bearers are elected,' one worker said.

The steering committee said when the secretary of this TUCSA union came to the factory 'she comes to have a

cup of tea with management, not to talk to workers'.

'We see our dues being deducted but the union serves the interests of the company,' workers said.

One worker said the thousands of Rands of union dues which had been collected over the past thirty years by the Glass Workers Union 'has just gone down the drain'.

A worker who had been working in the factory for over ten years said he remembered the Glass union holding meetings in the early days but now workers only attended because they got a R2 transport allowance. And even with the allowance very few go.

'The Glass Workers Union has always worked hand in glove with management,' the workers said.

Now, however, the workers have joined the Chemical Workers Industrial Union and are actively involved in the affairs of the union.

Due to the overwhelming support of the CWIU at Shatterproof, the company has implemented stop orders, the election of shop stewards and is negotiating a recognition agreement with the union.

But the Eastern Province is not the only region where glass workers are turning to the CWIU.

In the Transvaal, two agree-

ments have been signed.

These agreements which give full rights to the CWIU - including plant based bargaining for wages and working conditions - have been signed with Plate Glass in Germiston and Shatterproof Safety Glass in Rosslyn.

These have all been completed since the Glass and Allied Workers Union merged with the CWIU.

Senior shop steward at Plate Glass, Ronald Mofokeng said 'we glass workers are now seeing the advantage of building broad based industrial unions and of pooling the resources of small unions to make one big union.'

Workers boycott overtime

WORKERS at two Duropenta factories - one in Natal and one in the Transvaal - are boycotting overtime and the canteen in protest at the company's low wage offer.

The company recently signed a significant recognition agreement with the Chemical Workers Industrial Union which gave the union plant level bargaining rights.

Plant level bargaining has been strongly opposed by the giant metal employers' association, SEIFSA - Duropenta's main employer body on the metal Industrial Council.

The new agreement with Duropenta is a national agreement which will be extended to all the other factories in the group as the CWIU gains membership.

At present it covers Duropenta factories in Roodekop and in New Germany.

Soon after the agreement was signed the union plunged into wage negotiations in order to improve the dismal increases granted at the recent Industrial Council negotiations.

However, wage talks deadlocked when workers rejected the company's offer of an R8,50 a week increase.



THE International Metalworkers Federation recently held a Health and Safety Conference in Port Elizabeth as part of its drive for a better working environment for workers.

Attending that conference which took the form of an instructor's course were four organisers and shop stewards from FOSATU unions.

The people who went were June Rose Nala (Metal and Allied Workers Union, N Natal), Justice Mnguni (Autoplastics,

Pretoria), Charles Sathekge (Sigma, Pretoria) and Sidney Nyengane (CDA, East London).

The course was taken by Marchello Malentacchi, head of the IMF's Health and Safety department. He was assisted by FOSATU Eastern Province regional secretary, Les Kettleidas.

The five day course covered all aspects of health and safety from noise and chemical hazards to the effects of bad lighting on the eyesight.

The IMF lays down five

objectives of health and safety work:

- * to find and define risks of industrial injury and risks to health at the workplace.
- * to analyse and determine the nature of the risks, how they effect the worker and what safety measures need to be taken.
- * to correct the situation, introduce improvements.
- * to follow up - check that the

Workers learn all there is to know about health and safety

AFTER each session, the delegates broke into groups. Here are some of them going through the IMF manual.

measures have been properly carried out and have had the intended effect.

* to check and ensure that no new risks have been introduced into the working environment.

However, the IMF adds that many of the problems associated with working life will remain unsolved if there is not a strong and active trade union organisation at the workplace which can protect the interests of workers.