

Petrol bombs hit unionists' homes

PETROL bombs were thrown at the homes of two VW full time shop stewards in the early hours of Monday July 30.

VW branch chairman John Gomomo told FOSATU Worker News that he had woken up at about two because his baby had been coughing.

He said just as he was getting back to sleep he heard 'whoomf'.

'I ran into the lounge and out to the front gate to see if I could see anybody. But there was nobody there.'

'At first I did nothing about the flames but then I went back and screamed for my daughter to bring a bucket of water,' he said.

'We then put out the burning curtains,' he added.

The petrol bomb had been thrown through the lounge window and had then exploded against the burglar guards.

The fire burnt the lounge curtains, broke most of the window panes and damaged a chair, table and the radiogramme.

Brother Gomomo said it was lucky that the burglar guards had stopped the petrol bomb from going right into the lounge otherwise the fire would have been much worse.

He said the neighbours had heard a car about the time the petrol bomb was thrown but had thought it was Brother Gomomo coming home.

The other petrol bomb victim was Samuel Mpushe.

He said that a petrol bomb had been thrown on the roof of his house which had rolled off onto the grass at the back of the house.

'It sounded like a machine gun as it bumped down the roof,' he said.

Brother Mpushe said the police had found another four unused petrol bombs in the garden of his house.

These petrol bomb attacks form part of a whole sequence of attacks that have been made on National Automobile and

Allied Workers Union officials.

Over the past few years, a union organiser has been shot at, the general secretary's car has been painted with right-wing slogans and numerous smear pamphlets have been distributed both in Uitenhage and in Port Elizabeth.

In a statement released after the attacks, NAAWU president, Jurie Harris strongly condemned the petrol bombings as 'futile, misguided and an exercise of defeat.'

He said it was obvious that the attacks were an attempt 'to intimidate shop stewards, divert the militancy of workers and attempt to create racial division between so-called coloured and African workers.'

Brother Harris added that these attempts would not succeed.

'The militancy of workers shall not even be stopped by countless casualties on the road to freedom from oppression and exploitation,' he said.



VW Branch Chairman, John Gomomo surveys the damage caused by the petrol bomb thrown through the lounge window

Premier tussles with SFAWU

THE Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union has accused the Premier Group of shifting production from one factory to another in order to crush union organisation.

Earlier this year, the union was involved in a tussle with Premier at Jabula where SFAWU accused the company of provoking a strike in order to dismiss union activists.

This time, SFAWU says, in the middle of wage negotiations at Premier's Farm Fare factory at Wynberg near Johannesburg management suddenly announced that they were going to retrench almost 25 percent of the workforce.

Farm Fare claimed that it had suffered 'huge losses' but was not prepared to explain these losses to the union.

However, SFAWU subsequently established that a substantial volume of the company's production had been shifted to Ladysmith in Natal.

Workers at the Ladysmith factory are unorganised and predictably earn much lower wages than the Wynberg workers.

A SFAWU spokesperson said it was clear that Premier was not prepared to negotiate in good faith, 'but we are determined to organise all Farm Fare plants in order to fight for fair wages'.

Meanwhile, SFAWU has won a major breakthrough in the Natal dairy industry.

'Following months of deadlock with the dairy bosses, Clover in Durban and Maritzburg and Creamline in Pinetown have agreed to talk to the union,' a SFAWU organiser said.

These dairy companies have now agreed to shop steward recognition, access for union officials and stop orders.

They have also agreed to begin discussions on a full recognition agreement.

Executive slams union split

THE FOSATU Executive has strongly condemned the four sacked union officials for forming the splinter United Metal Mining and Allied Workers Union.

The Metal and Allied Workers Union's National Executive Committee fired three of the officials for gross misconduct.

Former general secretary, David Sebabi was fired for financial corruption.

And MAWU will be laying charges against him.

In the statement, FOSATU said it believed that the split was not in the interest of workers, particularly as the independent trade unions were trying to build worker unity.

The Executive said FOSATU would be holding a special Central Committee on August 11 to discuss and assist in resolving any problems in MAWU and in the Transvaal region which have arisen out of the split.

The statement said it still regarded the East Rand metal workers as members of MAWU and would take all steps to resolve any problems.

However, the splinter union is not a part of FOSATU and it would not be able to use the federation's offices.

And because of this, Andrew Zulu, who is acting president of the new union, can no longer be vice-president of FOSATU as he is not a member of an

affiliate.

The special Central Committee, the statement said, would be looking at full documentary information on the problem.

The FOSATU Executive criticised the 'splinter group' for forming a new union 'as a means of solving problems'.

Many of the workers, claimed by the splinter union to be members of UMMAWUSA, have already said they were unhappy with the split and that they would be remaining in MAWU.

Supervisors demand to be recognised union members

ARE supervisors workers or part of management? This question is being raised in many companies as more and more supervisors want to join a union.

At Chesebrough Ponds in Wadeville, the Chemical Workers Industrial Union has been waging a long battle with management on this issue.

The majority of first line supervisors at Chesebrough are union members.

Many have been members for nearly two years and have been previously acknowledged by management as members.

Their union subscriptions have been deducted like all other members.

However, management is now refusing to recognise their rights as union members - to be covered by the agreement and to be represented by shop stewards.

The issue first came to a head late last year.

A supervisor was dismissed and workers held a protest stoppage as they felt his dismissal was unfair.

However, when union shop stewards went to negotiate on his behalf, management told them that they could not represent him as he was part of management.

The union applied for a reinstatement order, which was granted by the industrial court.

Since that time the issue has been contentious.

Huge step towards proper child care

A HUGE step forward has been made towards providing proper child care for workers' children.

For the first time, a FOSATU union has signed a maternity agreement which not only guarantees re-employment.

The company, NCS Plastics in Pinetown, has also agreed to pay 33 percent of the workers' wages for three months of the maternity leave.

Together with the normal UIF Maternity Benefits, the woman worker will therefore receive 78 percent of her normal wage for these three months.

In addition to the three months paid maternity leave, workers have the option of taking an extra three months unpaid leave.

The company has also agreed to give women workers paid time off to attend post-natal clinics.

And for the first time, the maternity agreement makes an allowance for the fathers - the company has agreed to two days paternity leave.

FOSATU Workers News spoke to Chemical Workers Industrial Union shop steward, Dorothy Budokwe, about the importance of the maternity agreement.

'Amongst us black women there is a lot of child mortality because mothers don't have time to be with their children after birth' she said.

'We hope that with maternity agreements like this one, this

death might be reduced,' she added.

'Before women workers were only allowed to be away for a short time and then had to rush back to work even if the child was sick,' Sister Budokwe said.

Initially refused

She told FOSATU Worker News that the company had initially been reluctant to discuss a maternity agreement.

'But after some time, they saw it was necessary to listen to our demands.'

She said that the majority of the workforce at NCS Plastics were women - 'there are only about 10 men'.

Integral part

Explaining the need for paternity leave, Sister Budokwe said, 'Men workers are an integral part of the workforce, so it was necessary that men were also part of the agreement.'

'In the case of pregnancy, men must be given the chance to visit their wives in hospital,' she added.

FOSATU calls for release of detainees

THE FOSATU Executive has condemned the 'inhuman' detention of two organisers from affiliated unions.

Chemical Workers Industrial Union organiser, Xolani Nduna and Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union organiser, Zanevula Mapela were detained by Security Police early last month.

For two weeks the Security Police refused to say whether they had detained the two organisers.

In the statement released after the last Executive Committee meeting, FOSATU said it was 'completely opposed' to South

Africa's security laws and the powers they gave to the State

'This has led to the barbarous and inhuman treatment of people detained,' the statement added.

FOSATU said it fully understood why the oppressed people of this country opposed this regime by all means.

'We believe that no matter what the alleged crime of a person, they must have the right to civilized and human processes of law,' the statement said.

'Our brothers presently being detained are being denied this right and, this being the case, we call for their release,' it added.