

Table Spinners' two-year battle

AFTER a two-year battle, the National Union of Textile Workers has finally won stop order rights at Western Cape factory, Table Bay Spinners.

NUTW first applied for stop order facilities in August 1983 but was met with stiff opposition from TUCSA's Textile Workers Industrial Union which is party to the industrial council covering this factory.

Some of the TUCSA union's objections were that only unions party to the industrial council should be granted stop order facilities, that the granting of similar rights to other unions would make it easy for them to recruit and retain members and that industrial rest would be promoted if these facilities were available to such unions.

Set aside

The Industrial Court, to which the matter was referred, ruled in favour of the TUCSA union. But refusing to be defeated, the NUTW then took the case to the Supreme Court, where the ruling of the industrial court was set aside.

Permission for the union to have stop-order facilities was finally granted, with effect



Joyful Table Bay Spinners' workers

from July 1, after the matter was referred back to the industrial court.

Workers at the factory were jubilant when they heard the news earlier this month. Tini Sikota, senior shop steward and one of the first workers at the factory to break away from the TWIU to join NUTW, said he

had always been confident the union would win its case.

'I was sure from the beginning that we'd win. Workers at the factory wanted stop order facilities very much. What right did the TUCSA union have to try to block us from getting these when they only have about seven members at the

factory?' he asked.

'It is a good thing we have won. It was always difficult to collect subscriptions. I would sometimes have to spend about an hour — sometimes longer — collecting money from workers on a particular shift. Now shop stewards will be free to attend to other important worker

problems instead of spending all this time collecting money.'

'It will also be easier for us to get stop orders at new factories we organise. The TWIU won't try the same trick again.'

John Copelyn, NUTW's general secretary, agreed the judgement opened the way for the union at other factories.

'The industrial council tried to block us from having stability at the factory. They first said that although we had majority and recognition with management, this was not enough to grant us stop order facilities because we are not party to the industrial council.'

'This new judgement means that workers in the cotton industry, who were previously not allowed to have stop order facilities, will now be able to do so. They will be able to join the union of their choice without obstructions being placed in their way.'

'It is ridiculous for a union which does not represent the workers to have raised technical objections to stop order facilities being granted to one which is clearly representative,' he said, referring to the TWIU.



ON Thursday July 19 last year, Mary Manning was cashing up a customer's shopping at the checkout desk in one of the Dunnes Stores supermarket chain in Dublin, Ireland.

When she came to one of the items, a can of citrus fruit, in the customer's shopping basket, she politely explained that she would not be able to cash up that item. The fruit was 'produce of South Africa'.

Mary Manning was carrying out an instruction from her union, the Irish Distributive and Administrative Trade Union, not to handle South African goods. The store management suspended her that day.

There are 18 full time workers in the shop; the rest of the employees are temporary and part time. All the full timers plus one other are in the union.

When Mary was suspended all but five of them stopped work, contacted their union office and set up a picket outside the store entrance.

They are still on strike. The store has taken on a succession of scab workers to undermine the strike, and makes many deliveries at night to avoid the picketline.

The women readily admit that at the start of the strike, they knew little about South Africa, and were acting more from union loyalty. We reprint here an interview with shop steward, Karen Gearon, from the May/June issue of International Labour Reports.

'None of us knew very much about South Africa when we started the strike. We had had trouble just before all this with the management, and the



Mary Manning pickets the Dublin supermarket

union helped us a lot. So when we received this instruction not to handle goods from South Africa our feeling about it was, well the union had stood by us so we would stick by the union.

'One thing has definitely changed now though — now we will never handle South African goods. Even if the union said we should drop the boycott and go back we would not. We will not touch South African goods again.'

'The thing is that during the strike we have started to learn

about South Africa. When you start to find out something about what it is like to be a black worker in South Africa, well it just makes you determined to find some way of showing solidarity.'

'We do not believe for one second that by our action against Dunnes — or even if the whole of Ireland took the same kind of action — that it would smash apartheid. But we carry on the strike because we want to show our solidarity with the black trade unions

Irish workers refuse to handle S A's products

over there.'

'Some of the public pass our picket in the same way they would ignore any picketline. But we've also had abuse. We've been called nigger lovers. We've been told that the only reason we've been on strike is because we've a thing for black men.'

'We also get harassment from the police. One of the superintendents who is sent to police the picketline is a white South African. One time fourteen cops and two managers from Dunnes literally had us all pinned up against the wall.'

'Another time a couple of the girls were sitting in the loading

bay, which meant that the loading had to be done over their heads. One of the managers brought the shutter down which hit one of the girls badly in the back. But the cops did nothing.'

'Our strike has had quite a lot of attention now. Lots of members of the public do refuse to shop in Dunnes Stores. There has been support from workers in other shops, not in the form of strikes, but other shop workers are refusing to handle South African goods so that non-union shop workers have had to be put on to this work, and some shops have quietly taken South African goods off the shelves.'

'We have been in contact during the strike with unions in South Africa such as the Food and Canning Workers Union who have sent their support to us. We think that in the long term Irish unions should build up their links with non-racial trade unions over there.'

'A lot of unions in Ireland have got policies on South Africa, but I think it's getting a bit embarrassing for them now. Because we are saying — well you have got a policy on boycotting South Africa why don't you implement it. I hope our strike will push more unions to do just that.'

'As for Dunnes, we know the management is not showing any sign of giving in, but neither are we. We know that this is going to be a long strike now, but there is no question of any of us giving up. We would rather give up our jobs than give up the strike — and we're not doing that.'



Shop steward: Karen Gearon