

FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



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SARMCOL's twelve major shareholders' eyes must have nearly popped out when representatives of the Metal and Allied Workers Union walked into their annual meeting in Johannesburg recently.

In an unusual strategy, MAWU purposely bought 10 Sarmcol shares in order to attend the shareholders meeting.

At the meeting, MAWU organiser, Dumisane Mbanjwa, handed out a document detailing the union's grievances.

The statement says, 'Unfortunately we are well aware that many of you will just dismiss our attendance of this meeting as a gimmick to gain attention — merely another irresponsible act by politically motivated unions.'

'This attitude does and will cause suffering and hardship for all in South Africa.'

Sad state

'We are here because we believe that as shareholders of a British company operating in South Africa you should hear our side of the sad state of the industrial relations at your Sarmcol plant in Howick,' the statement says.

It continues to inform

the shareholders that in the 11-year history of MAWU, Sarmcol 'is a legend of struggle and bitterness.'

'We sometimes think that management are proud of such a record of keeping the union out for so long.'

The statement accuses Sarmcol of having never negotiated a recognition agreement constructively.

'In fact at the outset, recognition negotiations only started because of an out-of-court settlement.'

'Since that time all efforts by the union to secure a fair agreement with reasonable dispute settlement procedures have failed,' the statement adds.

Poverty wages

The statement goes on to discuss the wages earned by workers at the Howick plant which it says are 'far below' poverty scales.

'Are production workers really supposed to believe that there are no funds available of any sort to take basic wages above starvation levels,' the statement says.

The MAWU statement concludes by saying, 'At present the union is firmly resolved to sell its shares after this meeting because our members would not feel happy or morally secure in holding shares in a

Union tells shareholders Sarmcol is 'a legend of bitterness and struggle'

British company that had such an attitude to South Africa's social, economic

and political plight.'

At the meeting, the chairman of the company's

Board of Directors said he would take the matter up with the relevant managers.

May day march — Uniply fires them all!

IN one of the most severest cases of union bashing in recent times, Barlow Rand company, Uniply, fired its entire workforce rather than settle a dispute with the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union.

The dispute arose when on May Day, the Uniply workers decided at a lunch-time meeting to celebrate this Workers' Day by marching singing out of the factory gates when they had finished work.

At 5.15pm the workers, all wearing FOSATU May Day stickers, gathered at one point in the factory premises.

They asked one of the night-shift shop stewards to clock their cards while they all marched out of the gates.

While clocking the cards the PWAWU shop steward was stopped by management and sent back to work.

A few hours later, he was

told to leave the factory premises and return the next day for an inquiry.

As soon as he left work, the night shift downed tools demanding that the shop steward be brought back.

Uniply management refused.

After an hour the workers returned to work but staged a go-slow.

The next day management added fuel to the workers' anger by firing one of the night shift stewards for 'causing the stoppage' and issued warnings to the other two for taking part in the stoppage.

Uniply then fired the shop steward chairman and treasurer, Moses Mkhize and Johannes Msiya, for their part in the May Day march.

Workers saw this as a deliberate attempt by the company to smash the union so they went on strike on May 3.

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Singing Uniply workers outside the Cato Ridge factory.