

Nearly 100 workers show signs of cotton dust disease

Frame Brown Lung Campaign

AS more than 2 000 workers from Frame's New Germany mills were being tested for traces of Brown Lung, the company began to try and squash the National Union of Textile Workers' campaign.

Initial campaign results indicate that as many as 100 Frame workers show signs of being permanently disabled by the cotton dust disease, Brown Lung.

Meanwhile, Pinetex workers report that the company is 'scrubbing' the factory and that for the first time in 20-years they are being given masks to wear in the dusty areas.

And in an attempt to ensure that members of TUCSA's Textile Workers Industrial Union are not drawn into the campaign, Frame has been telling them that the company would be making arrangements for a 'government doctor' to test them.

Throughout the NUTW's recognition battle with Frame, the union has charged that the company has been favouring the TWIU. However, this has been denied by Frame.

An NUTW spokesperson said these moves by the company to squash the campaign have been unsuccessful because 'there seems

to be no government doctor about to step into the breach'.

He also said that workers were questioning what would happen to them if the company did find out they were sick.

'Would that mean compensat-

ion and job security or would the company select them for retrenchment?'

The union spokesperson said that the Frame group's retrenchment policy gave workers much to fear.

'It states that retrenchment will take place on the basis of least competent, first out.'

'Therefore, the more ill a person becomes through exposure to cotton dust, the more likely that worker will be selected for ret-

renchment,' he said.

'How much easier it will be for Frame, if the company has the medical results,' he added.

Although, Frame's moves coincide with the NUTW Brown Lung campaign in its factories, officially the company's managing director, Selwyn Lurie has maintained that 'it is co-operating with an investigation set up by the Textile Federation'.

In turn the employers' association, the Textile Federation, has told the press that it intends working only with the authorities not the union in sorting out its cotton dust problems.

The Textile Federation condemned the NUTW's campaign as being 'too emotive'.

The NUTW spokesperson said the union's Brown Lung campaign had gone too far to be stopped by these moves.

He said the union was at present investigating the establishment of a technical committee in terms of the Machinery and Occupational Safety Act in order to set a national cotton dust standard.

'Because of the skills we have built up through the campaign, it would be impossible to exclude the union from that technical committee,' he said.



Frame workers have their lungs tested for traces of Brown Lung.

TWIU distributes smear pamphlets

TUCSA's Textile Workers Industrial Union has stooped to smear tactics in an attempt to hold on to its declining membership.

Since the National Union of Textile Workers opened a branch in the Western Cape, hundreds of TWIU members have been crossing the floor to join FOSATU.

Recently 140 workers at BKB's Bellville wool warehouse resigned from the TUCSA union to join the hundreds that have resigned from TWIU at the giant Frame complex in New Germany.

NUTW now reports that less than a quarter of the workers at the New Germany complex belong to the TWIU - yet Frame is insisting in maintaining its recognition of the TUCSA union.

NUTW Western Cape branch secretary, Virginia Engel, said that in sheer desperation, the TWIU had distributed hundreds of pamphlets in an attempt to smear the general secretary of NUTW.

The racist pamphlet attacks Brother Copelyn for being a 'white attorney' and for wanting 'to win the war with black workers' blood'.

Commenting on the pamphlet, Brother Copelyn said TWIU fails to realise that workers were resigning from the TUCSA union because they get nothing out of it, not because NUTW's general secretary 'is a great guy'.

He said TWIU had lost more members in the last two months than NUTW had lost in its entire existence.

'Daniels knows that as a matter of principle we don't like to sue other unions and is therefore taking unreasonable liberties,' Brother Copelyn said.

Auto union improves tyre industry's 'dismal' wages

THE National Automobile and Allied Workers Union has extended its fight for a living wage to the Eastern Cape's tyre and rubber industry.

And in its first ever negotiations on the industry's industrial council, the union has hiked the minimum wages from R1,38 to R2,15 an hour.

The recently completed wage talks marked up another first for NAAWU - it was the first time that black workers had direct representation on the council.

Up to now the only union on the council had been the whites-only Yster-en-Staal Unie.

After a long struggle, NAAWU managed to break into the tyre and rubber council in March this

year. It immediately set about rectifying the 'dismally' low wages it encountered in the industry.

The new two year agreement came into operation on June 11.

And for the first time tyre and rubber workers have been guaranteed minimum six-monthly increases for the two-years covered by the agreement.

NAAWU's Les Kettleas who led the union's negotiating team said that workers were guaranteed a 10c increase not later than February, again in August and then again in February 1986.

The agreement expires in March 1986. Furthermore, a long service

leave has been agreed upon for the first time.

Brother Kettleas said this starts at two days for five-year's service and goes up to five days for 20-year's service.

On top of this, workers would get an extra public holiday during the year, he added.

Brother Kettleas said the agreement would mean that most workers would get a nine percent increase - at the minimum 20c an hour and at the maximum 58c an hour.

He said NAAWU would still be looking at the issue of incentive work and rates at plant-level.

And it intended to negotiate retrenchment and lay-off procedures with the tyre and rubber employers, he said.

Women demand guaranteed re-employment

ABOUT 200 workers at Motor Assemblies near Durban stopped work for about two-hours recently in support of a demand for guaranteed re-employment after maternity leave.

The women workers at this plant which produces Toyota cars and trucks went on strike when management told a pregnant worker that she had to go on maternity leave.

At Toyota women workers are given no guarantee that they will be taken back after maternity leave.

The National Automobile and Allied Workers Union is attempting to take this and other issues up with Motor Assemblies' management.

Jatex offered bribe, claims union

IN its attempts to keep out the National Union of Textile Workers, SA Breweries subsidiary Jatex tried to find out who had joined the union by offering a R1 000 bribe to a worker, claims the NUTW.

Earlier this year, in an out-of-court settlement this Rosslyn company agreed to recognise the NUTW if within three months it had attained over 50 percent membership.

The out-of-court settlement reinstated 50 out of the 100-odd NUTW members who were dismissed towards the end of last year.

To get above the 50 percent, the union has had to recruit from among the workers taken on by the company during last year's strike.

A key person in this campaign was Michael Bahlekazi who signed on numerous new members.

But, Jatex suddenly fired him for allegedly stabbing a fellow worker - an accusation which was flatly rejected by NUTW

members. After tense negotiations between the company and the union, it was agreed that Brother Bahlekazi would be taken back if he was found not guilty in the criminal case started by Jatex.

The court subsequently acquitted Brother Bahlekazi and significantly the judge said that his version was the most likely.

But rather than take him back the company decided to pay him R2 000 - as well as paying about R500 in back-pay.

NUTW branch secretary, Bangi Solo said Brother Bahlekazi accepted the company's offer but before he left management offered him another R1 000 if he would give them the names of all the workers that had joined the union.

This he refused to do, Brother Solo said.

The NUTW has recently handed in a list of all its members at the factory - which amounts to well over two-thirds of the work-

force. In spite of this being well beyond the 50 plus one percent

agreed to in the out-of-court settlement, Jatex has yet to recognise the union.

Personnel officer fired for taking bribes

WORKERS at the Bakers factory near Pinetown have put a stop to a personnel officer taking bribes in exchange for getting workers jobs.

He was fired. Shop steward chairman, Tom Dlamini said that towards the beginning of last month he went to speak to the personnel manager about the bribes.

He told the personnel manager that one of the workers still owed the personnel officer R30 for getting him a job.

'I got R30 from the manager after we had noted down the serial numbers which I passed on to the worker who then paid the personnel officer,'

Brother Dlamini said. He said that on the Friday after the worker had handed over the money, he had gone with the manager to confront the personnel officer.

'I asked him whether he had received any money from the worker which he eventually confessed to.

'When we asked him why, he replied that it was a gift from the worker who he had got a job,' Brother Dlamini said.

The personnel officer admitted that this had been going on since April, Brother Dlamini added.

He said he hoped that this would teach people who misuse their power a lesson.