

Call for charges to be dropped

THE International Metalworkers Federation has called on the South African government to drop 'once and for all' the case against Moses Mayekiso, the Transvaal branch secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

Brother Mayekiso, together with other members of the Stayaway Committee, was charged with 'subversion' for his role in the November stayaway — the charge carries a prison sentence of up to 25 years.

However, when the other members of the committee failed to appear in court, the State 'provisionally' dropped the case. It is believed that the others have fled the country.

IMF general secretary, Herman Rebhan, said: 'A provisional dropping of this case makes a mockery of even South African justice.'

'We say that Mayekiso should not have this threat hanging over his head,' he added.



Shop stewards from MAWU factories in the Transvaal discuss the industrial council wage talks

Housing for visiting families

IN an important victory for migrant workers, the Johannesburg City Council has agreed to build special accommodation for visiting wives and families.

For the first time an employer has recognised that migrant workers actually have the right to some form of family life.

One of the most inhuman aspects of the migrant labour system is that it separates husbands from their families for the length of the workers' contract.

Most workers only see their families once a year when the factories shut down because the 'homelands' are far from where they work.

Towards the end of last year the municipality workers complained to the Transport and General Workers Union that even when their families travelled to Johannesburg to see them it was impossible to find accommodation for them.

The workers who live in compounds told the union that when they were sick there were no nearby relatives to look after them.

Although, the TGWU is not recognised by the Johannesburg City Council it decided to raise the issue through the worker committees which have been set up in the six departments where the union is strong.

A union spokesperson said that after a number of meetings with the Avalon depot management it was agreed that special accommodation would be provided so that wives and families could visit for a short time.

'But it is not yet clear whether there will be restrictions on this accommodation which will be completed by July. These are things which the union will continue to fight,' she said.

Is a wage offer on the way?

THE metal employers association, SEIFSA, might make a wage offer after all!

The offer is expected to be made on April 30 when industrial council negotiations reopen.

However, Metal and Allied Workers Union sources say they don't expect the employers to offer much.

This year's metal industry's wage talks opened with a bang on April 2 when the employers said they could not offer any wage increase at all.

SEIFSA director, Sam van Collier told the unions that the South African economy was to

blame.

He said the low gold price, the high inflation rate, too much government spending, and high production costs had affected the metal industry's ability to compete with other countries.

Therefore, workers must agree to take no increase this year so that employers could keep down their costs, he added.

The unions affiliated to the International Metalworkers Federation (IMF), which have agreed to take a united stand at the wage talks, attacked this as 'absolute nonsense'.

They said that if the employers were not satisfied with government policies then they must get the government to change them — it is not a workers' government, it is an employers' government.

MAWU president, Jeffrey Vilane said that employers always wanted the workers to suffer when things were bad.

Other MAWU speakers challenged the employers to first tighten their own belts if they were sincere about cutting costs by stopping all management perks like company cars, free petrol and cheap housing loans for directors.

Also, directors salaries

should be cut so that their standard of living was closer to that of the rest of people in South Africa, they said.

Union speakers also said that huge amounts of money was wasted on the apartheid bureaucracy and the joke of a tricameral parliament. This money could be used to create jobs in South Africa.

At the end of the meeting, the IMF unions declared a dispute with the employers.

But at a meeting of the industrial council's Executive on April 13, SEIFSA's Sam van Collier agreed to reopen negotiations.

Workers slam E Cape 'opportunists'

WORKER leaders in FOSATU's Eastern Cape region have criticised a number of 'opportunistic' affiliates of the United Democratic Front (UDF) for using the Langa massacre as a means to boost their own organisations.

The worker leaders told FOSATU Worker News that MACWUSA (the Motor Assembly and Components Workers Union of SA) and GWUSA leadership were deliberately using their positions in the UDF to undermine FOSATU's strong presence in Uitenhage.

'They have hijacked funerals and used them as a platform to attack FOSATU and NAAWU leaders as enemies of the people.'

'More recently they have attempted to smear FOSATU by saying that it was responsible for the Langa massacre,' FOSATU unionists said.

Over the past few months, FOSATU has attempted to meet the Uitenhage leadership of the UDF in order to plan joint action by all progressive groupings. But has been

snubbed.

'Even before the Langa shooting, we tried to meet with them to discuss the general situation in the townships and to plan funerals for those shot by police,' a FOSATU regional spokesperson said.

'At the one meeting that we did have, which was convened by the church ministers, the UDF people said that if they had known that FOSATU was coming to the meeting they would not have come,' he said.

In general meetings at all

FOSATU factories, workers discussed the situation in the Uitenhage townships and the scurrilous attacks being made on the organisation.

Workers slammed the 'opportunists' for trying to create confusion in the townships under the popular banner of the UDF instead of working for unity.

It was decided to hold meetings in Langa, Kwanobuhle and Rosedale in order to challenge the attempts being made to discredit FOSATU and its leadership.

Brother of union organiser killed by police

ON Monday March 18, seventeen-year-old Zamekile Magugu went around to a house in the Uitenhage township of Kwanobuhle to pay his respects to a family whose son had been shot dead by police.

Hours later, he too was dead. His body, riddled with police bullets, was left lying in the street.

Since the beginning of the year, scores of young people have tragically died in similar circumstances in the Uitenhage townships. And it is still continuing.

National Union of Textile Workers organiser, Freddie Magugu, told FOSATU Worker News of the events that led to his younger brother's death.

'My brother, together with other friends of the family, had gathered that morning at the house in Kwanobuhle for a prayer meeting.'

'The dead son was one of those who were to be buried on March 21,' he said.

'While they were in the house, the police came in two Caspirs. One parked outside the house and fired tear gas

into the lounge.'

'Everybody ran out of the house to get away from the tear gas,' he added.

'My brother ran into the next door yard, to the back and jumped over the fence.'

'The other Caspir was parked there and it was from that Caspir that he was shot,' Brother Magugu said.

'The police fired a number of shots so my brother jumped over another fence and ran towards the church. It was while he was running that he was hit by one of the bullets.'

'He tried to get over the fence of the church. They shot him again.'

'He tried to get up and run behind a wall. The police shot again.'

'Another guy who had followed my brother said that after the police had checked he was dead, they shook hands and laughed.'

'The police left his body there and then went back to the house where they arrested everybody who was at the prayer meeting,' Brother Magugu said.