

Bata up to old tricks

CANADIAN-based multinational, Bata, has come under fire in the Canadian press recently for its treatment of black workers in South Africa.

Bata has 90 factories around the world, including four in South Africa. Two of these are in the 'homeland' of KwaZulu.

A report in The Globe and Mail newspaper pointed out that Bata had violated the Canadian government's code of conduct for Canadian companies operating in South Africa.

The newspaper report says that at Bata's two KwaZulu factories — Loskop and Keat's Drift — the company has:

- ignored the 'widely accepted guideline' that companies pay a minimum wage exceeding the poverty line by 50 percent.
- provided no medical, pension or sick funds.
- offered its black workers and

their families no assistance for medical and health facilities, housing or education.

- provided almost no opportunity for the movement of blacks into semi-skilled and skilled positions.

- made a mockery of the code's principle that 'companies should ensure that their employees are free to organise' into trade unions.

- refused to report annually to the Canadian government on its conditions of employment on the grounds that such a report would offend the South African authorities.

Soon after the report appeared in Canada's Globe newspaper, the Canadian government said it would be reviewing the code of conduct.

In 1980/81 workers at Bata's Loskop factory joined the National Union of Textile

Workers but even a lengthy strike could not get the company to the negotiating table.

Now, the NUTW has organised the majority of the workers at Keat's Drift. However, Bata has once again refused to respond to any union letters requesting a meeting.

And recently, the company 'retrenched' eight Keat's Drift workers who when asked by management whether they wanted a union said, yes.

NUTW's general secretary, John Copelyn said the union had invited the Canadian Ambassador to come and meet the Keat's Drift workers 'to hear their side of the story'.

He also said the union would be inviting the Canadian Labour Congress (Canada's trade union federation) 'to come and see for themselves' the activities of Bata in South Africa.



Chris Dlamini elected to the executive of food international

IN March FOSATU president, Chris Dlamini, was elected to the executive of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers Associations (IUF) as the Africa representative.

He is also an alternate vice-president of the IUF which represents more than 2 500 000 food workers in 67 countries around the world.

Brother Dlamini was elected to the IUF's executive at the international's 40th Congress at Geneva which was attended by 252 delegates from unions worldwide, including Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union general secretary, Jay Naidoo.

Sitting on the day after the

Langa massacre, the IUF Congress strongly condemned the 'apartheid regime' and pledged further solidarity action for South Africa's independent trade unions.

After the Congress, Brother Dlamini and Brother Naidoo visited Holland as guests of the VoedingsBond, the food union affiliate of the Dutch federation FNV.

While there, they spoke to striking meat workers who were protesting against proposed wage cuts. The strike by over 3 000 workers brought the Dutch meat industry to a complete standstill.

4 000 VW workers on strike over demand for pay increase

OVER 4 000 workers at the giant Volkswagen plant at Uitenhage downed tools on Friday April 19 in support of a demand for a wage increase.

When FOSATU Worker News went to press the strike was continuing and looked like it could spread to other motor plants in the region.

Earlier in April about 3 000 workers at the Mercedes motor assembly plant in East London staged a similar stoppage.

At Mercedes, the strikers returned when management hiked the minimum wage up from R2,15 to R2,60 an hour

and gave an across-the-board increase of 14c for unskilled workers and 24c for skilled.

The strikes are a response to the deadlocked wage negotiations at the Eastern Cape's motor industrial council.

Since November, the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union has been locked in wage talks with the motor employers.

The union is demanding a living wage of R3,50 per hour, the reduction of working hours to 40, better job security and improved retrenchment conditions.

So far, the employers have of-

ferred an across-the-board increase of 12c and 24c to be paid only from August 1 and an improved minimum rate of R2,60.

'This is completely unacceptable because the increase is nowhere near the inflation rate and the actual wage minimum in most of the plants is already at R2,70,' said NAAWU's Les Kettleidas.

As FOSATU Worker News went to press, the workers at General Motors instructed management that they had until Thursday April 25 to consider a demand for a wage increase otherwise they too would consider strike action.

The hungry search for profit

IN the last issue of FOSATU Worker News, we dealt with the 'voyages of discovery' which led to greater trade between Europe and the Middle and Far East. Due to this increased trade, traders and merchants grew extremely wealthy and became more powerful. They became wealthy because they were able to make huge profits. In this issue, we begin by explaining how profit works and then we move on to discuss how these early capitalists won political power. Remember students if you have any poems, drawings or want to make any comments, write to The Editor, P O Box 18109, Dalbridge 4014. This space is reserved for you!

the rulers of these lands. These rulers had many different names, but had similar powers and duties; for example, kings, queens, ashantis, princes, maharajas, emperors and chiefs.

Now the European capitalists could see that the trade was making these rulers richer, and in their greed, realised that they could make a bigger profit if they could control the trade in the far away lands.

But to do this they had a problem because these rulers had built up armies and navies to protect the control of the trade. This meant that the European capitalists would have to go to war if they wanted to take over control of the trade. To do this, they needed very strong armies and navies. With their own money, the capitalists could not really build up such strong armies, and any-

way, they were too greedy with their money and wanted to spend it on other things where they could make bigger profits. What the capitalists wanted was for the armies and navies of their countries to go to war for them. To do this they had to be in full control of the government of their lands, and also make everyone believe that war benefitted the whole country, and not just the profit seeking capitalists.

The Kings and Queens of Europe lose their heads

Now in trying to control the government the capitalists had a huge problem. This was because most countries in Europe were ruled by kings and queens who claimed that they represented God and earth. Such a claim was almost always supported by the Christian church.

To be a good christian, one had to respect and honour the kings and queens greatly. However, to make sure that they were respected and obeyed, the kings and queens had armies crush any discontent. To understand how big the problem for the capitalists was, we have to understand the position of the kings and queens in relation to the other wealthy and powerful groups in society.


The system of government then was what is known as feudalism which is based on an alliance between the great landlords (feudal lords) and the kings and queens. This alliance made it possible for the kings and queens to make use of the armies which the landlords controlled. The landlords depended on the kings and queens because they owned the land, and only gave the landlords some of it to control. These huge areas of land given to the feudal lords were known as fiefs, and we must remember that the king or queen could take it away from the landlord if the person did not obey orders. The poorest and least powerful people under this system were the peasants. The peasants worked on the land and fed themselves. They also produced a surplus which went to the landlord and the fief's army. In return for the food provided by the peasants the landlord gave them protection against attack from armies in surrounding fiefdoms.

Like peasants, the capitalists

had to pay many taxes. This obviously led to a great deal of conflict and disagreement. The capitalists had different ideas on how the army should be used, but they could do little about it because the army was controlled by the kings or queens and landlords.

So the capitalists, who were growing stronger as they made more capital, led a long struggle against the kings, queens and lords so that they could make more profit. The capitalists said that the kings and queens had too much power. Instead of this kind of government, the capitalists said that there should be democracy. For them, this meant that a parliament should be the government of the land. The people should rule, they argued, by electing others to represent them in parliament.

With these demands, the capitalists won the support of the oppressed peasants and the skilled workers (craftsmen) in the cities. In England, when they chopped off the king's head, the people realised that the idea of divine power (power given by God) was meaningless and great revolutions followed throughout Europe during the next 100 years. However, the peasants and skilled workers soon found out that this new democracy was not meant to include them. In the next issue we look at how the capitalists used their new power to force people off the land into the factories.



IN trade, profit works like this. If a trader or merchant bought a whole roll of beautiful silk material for R90, and it cost R10 to bring it back to Europe by ship, then it would have cost that person R100 altogether. Now when the material is sold, the trader may charge R130 which means a profit of R30. The person buying the silk may make shirts and dresses with the material and sell them for R160 and thus also makes a profit of R30.

As you can see, to start trading you need money to buy goods. The more money you have, the more you can buy. This money is called capital. So the person who has capital is called a capitalist.

To get more capital and to become wealthier, you need to trade at a profit. So the capitalists started their hungry search for profit. In doing this, they were partly being greedy but they also had a problem. They lived in fear of each other. If some capitalists became very rich they might have so much capital that they could pay higher prices, buy all the ships and so control all the trade. The search for profit became like a great race. The capitalists were competing with each other.

Europe goes to war
In the countries of Africa and Asia, where there had already been trade for thousands of years, trade was controlled by