

COMMENT

THE white referendum on the 2nd November proved what we have always said — the Nationalist government and business march side-by-side.

A few lone business voices said No but the rest marched to the government tune. Or is it not a case of the government marching to the tune of business.

If we are opposed to racism and we understand the meaning of democracy then it is impossible to accept the new constitution in any way at all. The new constitution is clearly racist and just as clearly undemocratic. It is a backward step because it keeps power with those who have always done the least to attack racism.

When FOSATU Shop Stewards went to management to find out whether their company supported the proposals, they were usually told that management did not comment on political matters. But these companies are members of the Federated Chamber of Industries which supported a Yes vote. Chris Saunders of Tongaat-Hulett, so-called Liberal, said Yes. Worse still many companies gave money to support the Yes campaign.

Why have business been so strong in their support for the new constitution?

Firstly, it keeps power with the present government and they believe this offers security for their profit making. They fear a change of government.

Secondly, it continues and deepens racial divisions among workers. They hope to avoid their great fear which is a united and organised working class.

Thirdly, they argue that the new constitution shows that there is change in South Africa and that foreign investment and trade should continue.

However, in their greed for profit businessmen are blind to some other political truths.

Firstly, since they have now openly tied themselves to this racist regime, they will have to stand or fall with it in the future.

Secondly, as we in the non-racial trade union movement have shown, we can fight and overcome racial division. Just as liaison committees failed so will these puppet parliaments fail. In fact, just as happened with liaison committees, this will strengthen our determination.

Thirdly, business may persuade reactionary governments such as those of Reagan and Thatcher. However, they will not persuade workers overseas. This unholy alliance of business and the Nationalist regime will only strengthen the pressure for disinvestment by foreign companies.

The policy of divide and rule always has some success, as opportunists try and get their small share of the power and wealth in South Africa. These opportunists will try and cause confusion in their search for support of the Labour Party and suchlike.

We must prepare ourselves for a struggle. Workers will certainly have important allies in this struggle for democracy. We have seen this in the formation of organisations such as the UDF. But the real and final target of the constitutional attack is workers and it will have to be workers who carry the main burden of the struggle for political and economic liberation.

Dunlop chases away its own 'scab' labour

FOR the first time in South Africa's labour history, police have chased 'scabs' away from a factory.

Usually police protect 'scabs' against 'intimidation' by strikers.

However, at Dunlop in Durban the police were called in to remove about 100 workers who had been hired by the company in order to break a strike by members of the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

But the strike did not take place on the day that management expected it but angry scab labour broke into the factory saying that the company had promised them jobs.

Security guards tried to get them out but were unsuccessful so management called in the police.

Police with dogs eventually chased the scabs off the factory premises.

The strike was due to start on November 14 but was called off by the workers when a Conciliation Board was appointed in a bid to settle the wage dispute between Dunlop and MAWU.

In wage talks, MAWU has demanded that the company raise wages to FOSATU's living wage of R2 an hour by next year.

But the company said it would only commit itself to reaching R2 by the end of next year.

A MAWU spokesperson said this was totally unacceptable as all the rest of the tyre manufact-

urers already paid at least R2 an hour.

The starting rate for Dunlop workers is R1,80 an hour.

When the company refused to budge from this position, the union was forced to call a dispute and applied for the appointment of a Conciliation Board.

MAWU also held a strike ballot at the gates of the Dunlop plant at which all 825 members voted in favour of a legal strike — only 6 workers voted against.

During the week of the strike ballot, the company began to gear itself up to breaking the strike and began to test unemployed workers who would be brought in to scab.

Dunlop also began settlement negotiations with the union but broke these off as soon as the Conciliation Board was appointed.

The workers have for the time being called off the strike but at this stage MAWU sees little chance of settling the dispute at the Conciliation Board.

MAWU has started a strike fund to which Dunlop workers are contributing R5 every two weeks and to which contributions from other factories in the area are added — on going to press the fund had about R4 000 in it.

Workers at the Dunlop factory in the Transvaal have pledged their support for their colleagues

in Durban and the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union has said it would 'fully support the Dunlop workers'.

Meanwhile, at Dunlop's Ladysmith factory, MAWU has called a dispute after the company refused to begin wage negotiations at all

Natal Branch secretary, Geoff Schreiner said the union had completed negotiating a recognition agreement with the company which would cover Ladysmith.

'We sent our signed copy of the agreement to Ladysmith to be signed by local management but Dunlop sent it back saying that they had changed their minds.'

He said they had wanted to change certain clauses in the agreement which would make it easier to dismiss striking workers

'We wrote to them saying that as far as we were concerned the agreement was in operation and that we wanted to start negotiating wages,' Brother Schreiner said.

When the company refused to begin wage negotiations, MAWU called for the appointment of a Conciliation Board and will be taking Dunlop to the Industrial Court for refusing to act in terms of the agreement and for not negotiating wages with a representative union.

Clash looms at Sarmcol

WORKERS at Sarmcol at Howick are preparing for a major clash with their bosses.

After a long struggle, the workers recently got management to agree to begin recognition talks with the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

The company agreed to complete the recognition talks with the union within three months.

However, negotiations have been held up by the company insisting that MAWU should merely accept the company's policy on severance pay.

This is despite the fact that earlier when Sarmcol retrenched a number of security guards it agreed to negotiate their severance pay with the union as part

of the recognition package.

'But when we came to the issue of severance pay during the talks, they now said that they had changed their minds — severance pay was non-negotiable,' a MAWU organiser said.

He said the company policy laid down that severance pay would be 2 days pay for each year of service after 5 years — if a worker has worked less than five years he would get nothing.

'We said we were not prepared to accept this and have declared a dispute,' the organiser said.

In the meantime, Sarmcol has said it is going to retrench another 39 workers.

It agreed to discuss the retrenchments with MAWU but once

again insisted that severance pay was non-negotiable.

MAWU has called for the appointment of a Conciliation Board and is considering strike action.

Meanwhile, the company has also called a dispute and is attempting to take the union to court for its unfair labour practice.

The company is claiming that because MAWU did not accept the company's severance pay policy, it was negotiating in bad faith.

MAWU said it would oppose the company's court action by asking the Industrial Court to throw the case out on the grounds that it is frivolous.

Thousands wear FOSATU stickers



Getting into the spirit of the FOSATU campaign — Uniply workers at Cato Ridge in Natal.



Catching the early shift, NUTW organiser Jabulani Gwala hands out stickers at Frametex.