

Workers also have rights!

IN the past South African employers have felt it was their right to fire workers at the slightest excuse.

But with the growth of the independent union movement, they are having to learn that workers have rights too!

So as fast as textile employers fire workers, the National Union of Textile Workers has had them taken back.

Recently the union has won the re-instatement of six of its members in the Transvaal.

At Polyknit, management started by firing the senior shop steward, Moore Mehlokhulu.

The NUTW took this to the Industrial Court which ordered that the company re-instate him.

REFUSED

However, the company thought otherwise and refused to take him back. It then fired the acting senior shop steward and three other workers.

The company claimed that it was 'retrenching' the workers.

Once again the NUTW took the company to court demand-

ing that Polyknit take back Brother Mehlokhulu and the four other workers.

The union argued that the company had broken an agreement that it had made with the union by retrenching the workers.

HOLD OFF

In the agreement, Transvaal knitting employers agreed not to retrench any workers this year. In return the union agreed to hold off the wage increase.

The court once again ordered that the workers be taken back and that they be paid back-pay for the time they had been out of work.

The NUTW has now cancelled its agreement with Polyknit because the company broke its part of the bargain and is demanding that it pay its workers an 11 per cent increase backdated to July.

At Braitex, the union won the re-instatement of Rosalina Moeketse who was fired after she complained that she was being underpaid.

Sister Moeketse signed a grievance form along with 11 other workers saying that they were being underpaid in relation to other workers.



Maxie Dreyer (centre) together with the three women workers who gave evidence during her court case. Also with them is NUTW Western Cape organiser, Virginia Engel (far right) and FOSATU regional secretary, Titus McKinnon (far left). STOP PRESS: Sister Dreyer has been re-instated by the court.

ance form along with 11 other workers saying that they were being underpaid in relation to other workers.

The company upped the wages of the other 11 but did not put up Sister Moeketse's wages. So she filled in another grievance form.

In response to this, a manager called her in, insulted her and threatened to fire her.

Sister Moeketse then decided to fill in another grievance form complaining that she had been 'abused' by a manager.

On getting the grievance form, the company fired her without any hearing for making 'inflammatory' allegations about a manager.

In an out-of-court settlement with the NUTW Braitex agreed to pay her R250 in back-pay and

to take her back. The company also agreed to look at her wage complaint if she withdrew the complaint against the manager.

Her wages have since been raised to the level of the other workers.

Meanwhile in the Western Cape, the NUTW is waiting for the court judgement in another case of unfair dismissal.

At Franz Falke, management fired Maxie Dreyer for supposedly getting workers to sign a petition during working hours.

The petition had been suggested by Franz Falke in a Conciliation Board as a way that the union could prove it was supported by the majority of workers in this Belville factory.

However, the company not only fired Sister Dreyer for

allowing workers to sign the petition, it also posted management at the gates to prevent workers signing anywhere on factory premises.

In spite of this the NUTW was able to prove that it was supported by the overwhelming majority of workers at Franz Falke.

The union took the company to court in a bid to win the re-instatement of Maxie Dreyer.

The NUTW argued that as a supervisor Sister Dreyer was authorised to allow people to leave work for short periods of time.

It also argued that Franz Falke would never have fired her if she hadn't been a member of the union.

The union is expecting the court to order that Sister Dreyer be taken back.

NUTW sets picture straight for International's officials

A NUMBER of key TUCSA unions have been trying to deceive senior officials of the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation.

During a recent visit to South Africa by the international's president and general secretary, the TUCSA unions tried to make out that the independent unions, particularly the National Union of Textile Workers, was causing the division in this country's

worker movement.

The TUCSA unions claimed that 'overseas money' was being used to 'disrupt and divide' established unions instead of being used to organise the unorganised workers.

The unions also claimed that 'threats and intimidation' were being used against workers to 'pressurise' them to leave their union and to join other unions.

'The friction which exists today in our industries did not emanate from the established unions, and we would certainly like to see it ended in the interest of all workers concerned,' the TUCSA unions told the international

Luckily the picture was set straight by the National Union of Textile Workers which underlined the divisive practices of the TUCSA unions in a report given to the international's senior officials.

NUTW said when it was formed in 1973 it used to co-operate with the TUCSA unions. However as soon as the State began to 'harrass' the NUTW by banning and detaining its officials, 'we found that the TUCSA unions chose to desert as rapidly as possible', the report said.

officials.

In November 1976 when some 26 union activists were banned by the State, the TUCSA general secretary told the press that 'people who disturb public peace should not be surprised when the State clips their wings'.

And more recently when trade union leader, Neil Aggett, died in detention, the TUCSA unions refused to join in with the independent unions' outrage as they had 'no knowledge of Neil Aggett's activities'.

The National Union of Textile Workers also told the international's officials that TUCSA had called for the banning of unregistered unions and for the prosecution of illegal strikers at its recent congress.

The report said that to find a union movement calling for the State to prohibit worker organisation when migrant workers from neighbouring countries were prohibited from joining registered unions was an 'absurdly anti-worker position'.

On top of this, the NUTW said the TUCSA unions had assisted in 'smashing' strikes, used industrial councils to block the union and had been brought in as 'sweethearts' by employers.

So who is causing the division?

However, the deadlock over plant-level bargaining rights could lead to a collapse of the talks, he said. The CWIU would then continue to negotiate wages and working conditions at their members' factories and shelve the idea of industry-wide negotiations, he added.

National paint wage talks flounder

THE first-ever national wage negotiations in the paint industry are floundering as unions and employers battle over the issue of plant-level bargaining.

A spokesperson for the Chemical Workers Industrial Union said that some of the members of the South African Paint Manufacturers Association had insisted there should be no negotiations at factory-level once a national wage minimum had been set.

'This is totally unacceptable to our union which will never give up the right to plant-level bargaining,' he said.

'There should be no condition on plant-level bargaining except that the union should be representative,' he added.

He said that if an agreement was reached on wages and working conditions it would lead to substantially better conditions for workers in non-unionised plants.

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ITGLWF general secretary, Charles Ford, together with two members of NUTW's National Executive