

AT LAST! Five months later, the Minister of Manpower, Fanie Botha, has finally appointed a Conciliation Board for the Frame dispute.

During those five months, the National Union of Textile Workers has been forced to go to court twice to block Frame from recognising the Textile Workers Industrial Union.

All this could have been avoided had the Board been appointed earlier.

BRAKE

It is likely, though, that Frame's opposition to the Conciliation Board acted as a brake on an early decision from the Minister.

At a recent general meeting hundreds of Frame workers crammed into Kranskloof hall to elect their representatives who will sit on the Conciliation Board.

This will be the first time that workers have ever effectively participated in any negotiations with Frame management.

TESTIFY

However it remains to be seen whether Frame will even agree to go to the Conciliation Board.

If not, the NUTW will proceed straight to the Industrial Court with its unfair labour practice case.

In this case, workers will testify how they were forced by management representatives to join the TWIU.

The NUTW will also tell the court how Frame had initially agreed to recognise it mill by mill - when it had got a majority.



Frame workers greet the news of the appointment of a Conciliation Board

Frame C.B. at last!

But the company shortly after this changed its mind and said it could not recognise the union because it did not have a majority in the entire Pinetown complex.

It then claimed that TWIU had

that majority.

Frame will deny all this.

Meanwhile in the mills, workers are resigning from the TWIU daily and are joining NUTW.

And last month workers from the various Frame mills travelled

up to Pietermaritzburg to watch the outcome of NUTW's court case.

In an out-of-court settlement, Frame agreed once again not to recognise TWIU at the Frametex mill until the dispute was settled

either by the Conciliation Board or the Industrial Court

NUTW organiser, Jabulani Gwala said the support for NUTW was 'high' and workers were 'eagerly' awaiting the Conciliation Board.

Pipe-wielding gang attacks NUTW members while recruiting

THE Frame campaign was recently marred by violence when supporters and shop stewards of the Textile Workers Industrial Union beat up and seriously injured three members of the National Union of Textile Workers

As a result criminal charges have been laid against these TWIU members.



Albert Hadebe

The incident occurred one evening last month when NUTW members were peacefully recruiting workers outside Frame's Pinetex mill.

Brother Albert Hadebe who was severely injured said while he was signing up workers he had noticed a shop steward from the red card union (TWIU) with 'something' in his hand.

'I got a strange feeling as this man had previously chased me and said he would kill me.

'He then started whistling to call all the people around,' Brother Hadebe said.

He said he had then pushed NUTW organiser, Jabulani Gwala aside as he could see what was going to happen.

'After that the fight started and the people with sticks and pipes began hitting me and I fell down,' he said.

Brother Albert Hadebe was taken to hospital where his broken arm was treated and numerous cuts on his body and head were stitched.

Sisters Gugu Khambule and Sina Buthelezi also had cuts from the attack which were stitched.

At the Frame meeting at Kranskloof, NUTW general secretary, John Copelyn told workers that it was obvious that a number of 'red card' activists were getting desperate.

'It would be easy for us to get sticks and do the same thing to TWIU members' he said.

'But our fight is not with other workers. It is with Frame,' he told the crowded meeting.

Rehiring of workers becomes prime issue

AS the economic recession begins to lift in South Africa, the issue of re-hiring retrenched workers is likely to become a prime focus for worker action.

Many companies throughout the country which are organised by FOSATU have agreed to give preference to workers they have retrenched.

But, as with many other agreements reached with unions, not all the companies stick to them.

Last month at Hammarsdale Clothing in Natal, the company took on 9 workers before negotiating with the National Union of Textile Workers.

PREFERENCE

Branch secretary, Prof Sineke said the company had retrenched 460 workers in February and at the time had agreed to give first preference to these people.

On hearing of the hiring of the 9 new workers, the entire workforce of Hammarsdale Clothing immediately downed tools.

RESULTED

The two-day strike resulted in the company agreeing to employ more than 40 of the retrenched workers as well as the 9 who, according to management, were going to teach the retrenched workers a new production line.

CONSULTING

It also agreed not to employ any outsider without first consulting with the NUTW and has said that by March next year all the retrenched workers would be re-employed.

Brother Sineke said the company had also said that nobody would lose pay because of the strike which he saw as an acknowledgment by the company that it had 'blundered'.

Meanwhile at Hammarsdale's Flamingo Textiles, workers have been on strike for over two weeks.

They are demanding the reinstatement of a women worker who was fired for allegedly refusing to sign a warning.

The NUTW has contended that this is an unfair dismissal as a person should only be fired after three written warnings.

On going to press the workers were still out and the company had threatened to close down the factory.

Franz Falke turns around

IN a major turn-around, Western Cape textile factory, Franz Falke has agreed to begin negotiations towards recognising the National Union of Textile Workers

This German-based company had initially gone out of its way to block the unionisation of its workers and instead attempted to introduce a works committee.

This led to the NUTW taking the matter up with the 250000 strong German textile union which pledged its support.

At a recent sitting of a Conciliation Board, the company agreed not to victimise union members and has granted stop order facilities.

However, Franz Falke, though, only changed its initial stand when the majority of the workforce proclaimed their support for the NUTW in interviews with department of Labour officials.

And at this stage it has refused

to disband the works committee or to re-instate workers who were unfairly dismissed.

So although the union and the company have begun to travel on the road towards recognition, the journey is unlikely to be a smooth one.

A union spokesman said there were still a number of obstacles to overcome but the union was making 'slow but steady progress'.

At another Western Cape factory, Table Bay Spinners, the union has appealed to the Industrial Court against an industrial council decision not to grant it stop order facilities.

Once again a TUCSA union is abusing its position on an Industrial Council.

The Textile Workers Industrial Union is deliberately blocking the right of Table Bay Spinners' workers to be represented by the NUTW.

SORRY!

WE could not fit in 'The Making of the Working Class' due to the length of the Poland feature. But next month we will carry a double page spread of the Working Class history.