

FOSATU

WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



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2 000 workers fight for their rights

DUNLOP BATTLE



Dunlop workers vote in favour of continuing their strike

CLOSE on 2 000 Dunlop workers from three Natal factories are solid in their refusal to return to work until five fellow workers are reinstated.

The legal strike began on August 17 when over 1 000 workers at the company's tyre plant in Sydney Road voted in support of strike action in a secret ballot.

The five dismissed workers were all from the Sydney Road plant.

Four of them, all with more than 13-years' service, were dismissed for what the company called 'inefficiency'.

The Metal and Allied Workers Union said Dunlop had made no attempt to transfer the workers to

other jobs, to retrain them or even consult with them.

'Once you get too old to work, Dunlop just throws you on the scrap heap,' MAWU branch secretary Geoff Schreiner said.

The fifth worker was fired for 'absenteeism' although he had a doctor's certificate to explain his five-day's absence from work.

The union took steps to try and resolve the dispute but Dunlop said it was not prepared to review the dismissals nor was it prepared to refer them to mediation or arbitration.

Virtually, the only path open to the union was strike action.

Within days of the strike beginning at Sydney Road, 120 workers at Dunlop's sports factory downed tools in support of the demand for the reinstatement of the five sacked workers.

In both these cases, within hours of the strikes breaking out, the company announced that it was dismissing all the strikers.

The legal strike has now swelled to include the company's Ladysmith tyre factory where workers have staged a sit-in at the canteen every day for over two weeks.

Dunlop's Benoni industrial products factory also stopped work for a brief period.

Support for the strikers is

growing daily.

The recent congress of the South African Council on Sport (SACOS) pledged its support.

In a statement released after the congress, SACOS said it was the basic democratic right of workers to strike.

It added that the strike 'in the economic system operating in South Africa is one of their only non-violent means of expressing their rejection of the dictatorial actions on the part of management'.

On September 22, the Executive Committee of FOSATU will be considering what action the federation will take in support of the Dunlop strikers.

The Dunlop dispute was even raised at the recent conference of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) - Britain's national trade union federation.

Meetings have also been held with two British unions which have membership at Dunlop factories in England - the Transport and General Workers Union and the General and Municipal Workers Union.

They are both considering what appropriate solidarity action to take.

Brother Schreiner said it was likely the Dunlop strikers would get a lot of support from overseas unions as the company was known world-wide as a 'union basher'.