

AFTER THE longest sit-in in SA history, 2100 dismissed Mawu members at Haggi Rand forced management to reinstate them and negotiate their demands.

The dismissals follow a long dispute over wage demands. When management refused to negotiate increases, workers began a sit-in. They said they wouldn't leave until management gave in to their demands.

SASPU National spoke to an old man who now has his job back 40 years after he started work with the company. "I was born in the days of the ICU (Industrial and Commercial Workers Union). After working on a farm near Newcastle, I came to Johannesburg. I started at the company in 1948.

"There were no fork lifts in those days. We moved everything by hand, or with ropes. It was a small company then. I helped build the company.

"All my life I've sold my labour to Haggi Rand. I've helped build Haggi Rand. But instead of thanking me, they thanked me by kicking me out."

If the Haggie workers had not been reinstated, this man, and

Haggi workers fight and win.

everyone else, would not qualify for a company pension, or any long service benefits.

"That's why we sat in", he said. "We said we wouldn't leave until management gave us our jobs back, and stops paying us starvation wages. The sit-in is the only way to make management listen. We used their language, and they wouldn't listen." The dismissed workers work at two Haggi Rand plants, in Germiston, and Jupiter, in Johannesburg.

The Metal and Allied Workers' Union has been organising at the plants since 1982. There are strong shop steward structures, but Haggie still hasn't signed a recognition agreement with the union.

And the company refused to negotiate a wage increase, or changes in working conditions and benefits.

"But workers will only believe they're serious when they begin talking to the workers. Right now, they talk one language, and then do something else."

"This is typical", said a Mawu official. "Haggie is owned by Gencor, and along with the other big groups like Anglo, they're encouraging workers to join trade unions, and they're calling for change in South Africa, and an end to apartheid.

"Haggie insists that we go through the correct structures, which means going to the Industrial Council.

"But there, Haggie hides behind

the smaller companies, who say they can't pay higher wages. It's the small companies who set the minimum wage level, and then Haggie refuses to negotiate increases above that."

Haggie can easily afford higher wages. 75 percent of its products are exported, and, with the current exchange rates, the company is making massive profits.

Workers are demanding a share of this, instead of their present starvation wages.

Mawu claims wage levels have actually dropped over the years. In terms of what the money could buy, the union has calculated that workers at the plant in 1946 were actually being paid R3,80 a week; now the minimum wage is R2,07.

And in 1962, workers were paid R8 per week; that wage bought more than a wage of R121 a week would buy now, because the Rand is worth less.

They're demanding a minimum wage of R3,50, up from R2,07, and a 50c increase for everyone.

They're also demanding May Day as a public holiday, and big increases in overtime pay to discourage the company from using overtime to make up for retrenched workers. The workers say that overtime takes jobs from the unemployed.

When negotiations with the company deadlocked, workers demanded to meet with the company's shareholders. When they also refused to budge, the workers decided to stage a sit-in. Production was stopped entirely.

They were highly disciplined: no one could leave the plant without the permission of all fellow workers. And if anyone who'd been out came back later than they'd agreed, that person was fined.

When the sit-in began, women came flocking to bring food to the strikers. A meeting was then called where the women came together to discuss how they could raise money to support the strikers and their families.

A committee was elected, and made responsible for collecting money from nearby factories.

"The strike is the right thing," said the secretary of the support committee. "Their wages can't cover all our needs. So now we are supporting them. Its tough but what can we do?"

"And there's no difference between those in the compound and those who live in the township. They're all working for the same thing."

After long negotiations with Mawu, the company backed down, and announced that all workers would be re-instated, and that it would begin negotiating the workers' grievances.

No freedom in this meat Enterprise

'DON'T BUY meat that has an Enterprise label on it', say Sweet Food and Allied Workers' Union members dismissed from Kanhym's Pretoria plant.

They're launching a boycott of all products distributed by Kanhym, which includes Enterprise meats, sausages and polony, and all meat with the Kanhym label.

Kanhym, which is owned by Gencor, fired 150 workers in February after a strike over retrenchment procedures.

After workers were suddenly told the plant would be closed down, they went on strike to pressurise the management into reaching a compromise settlement, and were fired. They see this as a crude attempt to resolve the retrenchment problem.

"Through the boycott we are going to force Kanhym to recognise its social obligations", said a SFAWU official. "The company must know that they're not the only people with a right to live.

Num goes underground

SIT-INS ARE now being used on the mines to pressurise management into addressing workers' demands.

1 200 workers at the Blyvooruitzicht mine, staged a 36 hour sit-in underground after management refused to discuss a new experimental leave bonus system with them.

Last year the workers, through the National Union of Mineworkers, demanded a bonus system when they produced more than their quota. Management refused and then, without discussion with the workers, introduced a bonus system.

The new system was only introduced in certain sections of the mine, so workers demanded that management discuss the matter with them.

Management ignored this, so they came out on strike on Sunday March 7. Management responded by shutting down the entire mine.

1 200 miners on the Tuesday night shift continued their sit-in underground and stayed down.

They stayed down for 36 hours four shifts without food. Workers only went back to work that Friday.

Management meanwhile had arrested two shaftstewards, and when workers demanded their release, the police were called in. Hundreds were injured and seven people were killed in the clashes that followed.

40 workers are still being held on charges under the Internal Security Act.

Mine turmoil

*A FIGHT at Vaal Reefs left four team leaders dead, sparking further tension on the mine when nine people were arrested in connection with the deaths.

When management refused to release them, thousands came out on strike; within days, 19 000 workers were out.

The strike was called off when three of the workers were released. But March 6 saw the start of a go-slow to force management to address other grievances.

Their demands include an end to the colour bar and discrimination, better protective clothing, and full-time shaft stewards.

Work returned to normal when management agreed to begin negotiations with the mineworkers to reduce the tension. But tension on the mines will remain until the root causes of that tension are abolished like the migrant labour system, and the hostels.



Cawusa members showing solidarity with American retrenched workers.

Solidarity with US workers

OVER 300 Catering, Commercial and Allied Workers' Union (Cawusa) members at the Elandsfontein 3M plant recently downed tools in solidarity with 450 American workers retrenched from 3M in Freehold, New Jersey, when their plant was closed.

"We believe that 3M needs to be informed in no uncertain terms that we take strong exception to their despicable action to impose hardships on fellow workers and their families in America", say the workers in a statement.

At 1 pm on February 28, the Elandsfontein workers downed tools. They marched around the factory with union banners and tried to present management with a letter urging them to reconsider its decision to close the Freehold plant.

Management refused to see them. Workers then gathered round a flag pole flying the SA flag, and lowered it to half-mast.

They said they saw the SA flag as a symbol of the 'unholy alliance' between the bosses and the SA government. Corporations like 3M were

built with the sweat of generations of workers, 'yet they care very little for the welfare of their workers'.

"They are motivated by glutton-like greed for profit. So greedy are they for profit that they are willing to endanger the livelihoods of 450 humble people and their families for a few dollars."

* The sympathy strike follows a week-long strike at the plant over retrenchments. The company agreed to re-hire workers who'd been retrenched earlier, instead of recruiting new casual workers.

A Freestate Foothold for SAAWU

SIX MONTHS after it started organising in Bloemfontein, the South African Allied Workers' Union (Saawu) claims 6 000 members there. And the last month has seen two important victories for Saawu members in Bloemfontein at the Polyflora and Unipipe plants.

73 workers at Polyflora forced management into negotiations after a week-long sit-in.

Employers' force breaks sit-in

EMPLOYERS ARE now using force to stop sit-ins.

Police, using dogs and teargas, were called in to evict workers from a Germiston factory recently, after earlier attempts to break the 12 day sit-in had failed.

The workers come from two companies, operating from the same premises: Pan African Shopfitters, organised by Paper Wood and Allied Workers' Union, and GB Engineering, organised by Mawu. The dispute began when manage-

ment announced it was going to cut the workforce from 300 to 100 people.

When management refused to budge from its decision, the workers opted for a sit-in.

The sit-in began on March 6, and management immediately dismissed the workers. Workers refused to leave.

For two weeks they sat tight in the face of management's manoeuvres. But on March 18 management cal-

led the police in.

Workers say about 200 police were used to drive the workers out of the plant, using dogs and teargas.

One of the workers is now facing charges under the Internal Security Act, for allegedly possessing a petrol bomb.

After long negotiations, most of those arrested were released on R200 bail. Now they're waiting trial on charges of arson and malicious damage to company property.

and proper payment for overtime work;

● Maternity leave for all women workers;

● Workers must be allowed to receive phone calls.

Workers came out on strike when management refused to negotiate. On Monday, March 3, they clocked in but refused to work, and instead began their sit-in.

It continued all week until March 7, when management fired all the workers.

After meeting with union representatives, the company agreed to reinstate all workers, and 'open its doors' to the union.

160 Saawu members at Unipipe also forced management to negotiate after a two day strike.

The dispute centred on the company's refusal to recognise Saawu, and when it claimed it had 'documentary proof' that Saawu was 'not a trade union', workers came out on strike.

Now the company is promising to negotiate.