

NAMIBIAE - LABOUR

1993 - 98

CDM cuts back on mining jobs

WINDHOEK — De Beers Centenary AG's wholly owned Consolidated Diamond Mines (CDM) said 834 jobs at its various operations had been terminated. (222)

The company said no more involuntary redundancies would be needed in the main mining area after a strong response to offers of voluntary redundancy or early retirement. (324)

CDM said a total of 653 employees had opted for voluntary redundancy and 181 at three satellite mines had been retrenched.

CDM spokesman Dave Fanshawe said the company was cutting its work force to 5 000 from 6 000. *Blom 9/13/93*

This follows De Beers' Central Selling Organisation's decision to cut deliveries from producers by 25% last year in response to poor diamond markets.

"While the loss of job opportunities is regretted, it should be noted that only 3% of the total work force was involuntarily retrenched," a statement said. — Renter.

COMPANIES

Mining tax laws 'increase risk'

WINDHOEK — Gold Fields of Namibia said yesterday new mining tax laws in Namibia would increase risk to investors and threaten new projects

Administration director Martin Churchhouse said it would not pay a dividend for the six months to June 30 because of low base metal prices and rising wages

It was also unhappy over new tax laws including an increase in the write-off period for capital spending to three years from one year. *BiDay 15/6/93*

The company, owned by Gold Fields of SA, has paid a total of 50c in dividends since the end of its 1989 financial year.

Gold Fields said in a report to the government that recent income tax amendments and new write-off periods would affect new projects

The new measures would affect projects by lowering the return on capital invested and in some cases increasing the period for recovery of capital, thereby increasing the risks run by investors significantly.

"Low rate-of-return marginal projects typical of Namibia will in many cases become unviable," Gold Fields said.

Churchhouse said employee wages had risen 280% between 1982 and 1991 without a corresponding rise in productivity —
Reuter. *(222)*

Namibian unions 'in tatters'

South 29/10 - 2/11/92

Cosatu's close alliance with the ANC might not benefit the trade union movement, if the Namibian experience is anything to go by, says **CHRISTELLE TERREBLANCHE** (222)

NO EYEBROWS were raised when the general secretary of Namibia's umbrella trade union became a political office bearer after the country's independence elections in 1989.

Six months later, in April 1990, some disgruntled unionists tried to open the debate. One of them, Mr Richard Pakleppa, said openly the unions were in tatters.

Little attention was paid to the objections.

The unions had emerged in the mid-eighties as part of the struggle against South Africa's illegal occupation of the territory. They claimed to represent both workers and the unemployed.

Eventually, union leaders' names appeared on Swapo's list of election candidates.

This is easily familiar if one looks at the position of Cosatu, which put forward names for the ANC list, despite having well-known independent stance.

Even now, the ANC is trying to discourage Cosatu from its proposed national strike.

In Namibia, many of the union leaders had valuable skills and experience that stood Swapo in good stead. But those who remained behind were directionless.

The National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) general secretary, Mr Ben Ullenga, became deputy minister of labour and was said to be the first of the new Swapo leaders to acquire a new lux-

ury car. Other union leaders were quick to accept top posts at the large, foreign-owned mining companies in the country.

"Co-opted," it was whispered. But nobody spoke out. People were cautioned that because of Namibia's fragile and lopsided economy, this kind of settlement was necessary for reconstruction and nation building.

In 1991 the much weakened umbrella union decided, not to disaffiliate from the now firmly entrenched government, but to adopt a resolution of "open consultation" with members as well as the authorities.

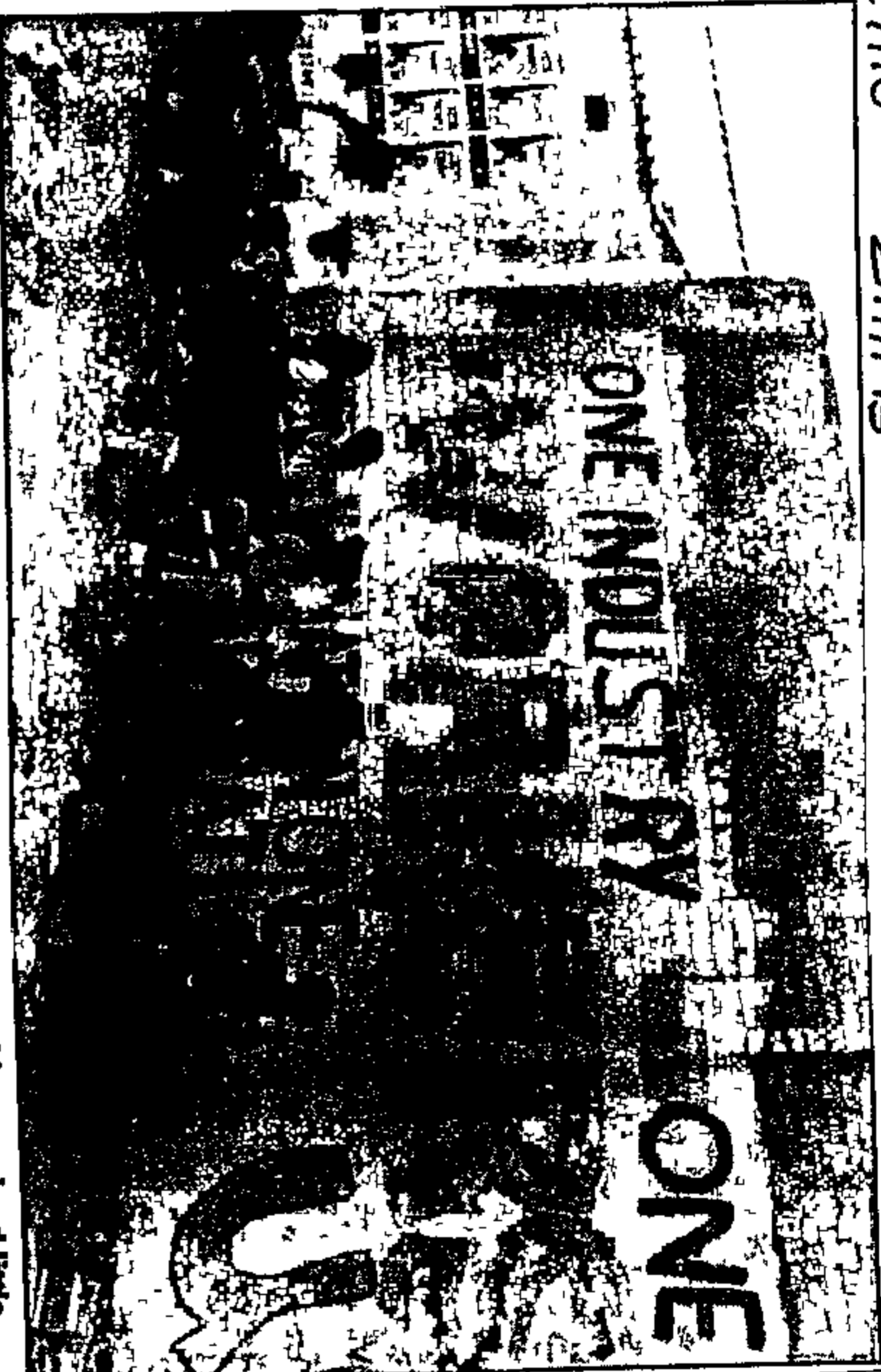
"This never happened," says Dr Henning Melber, a trade union member and Director of the Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU).

Last month NUNW held its First Ordinary Congress in Windhoek. The congress resolved not to disaffiliate from Swapo, despite several proposals for such a move.

Journalists and observers accused the congress of undemocratic procedures in this regard. The motions for disaffiliation were scantly debated and not voted on.

NUNW denied the allegations, saying it has always been autonomous and independent of the government and has often sharply differed from the ruling party.

On the issue of little real debate at the congress, it denied that nothing was done to educate union members. NUNW claimed to have launched a literacy programme, but none of the newspapers had heard



DIVISIVE UNITY: Since the independence of Namibia, the unemployed have gained little from the unions' affiliation to the state

Said Melber: "There might have been consultations and negotiations between NUNW and Swapo behind closed doors, since the liberation movement turned into a fully-fledged political party. But clearly, there was no open discussion with transparency towards union members, let alone the interested public."

In short, it is common knowledge that the unions, which derive power from a strong bargaining base, have not been seen to do anything to promote the cause of workers or the unemployed.

Little debate was evident at the congress. "Those who wanted for an intense and serious debate on one of the pillars of the trade union's self-understanding, were finally disappointed," Melber said.

At the congress the decision to

continue "the historical ties with Swapo" was taken on the grounds that continued affiliation had caused "no concrete damage".

The Minister of Trade and Industry, Mr Hideo Hamutenya, asked by SOUTH whether affiliation had been beneficial to development at grassroots level, was unable to give a direct answer.

Instead, he cited examples of union ties with the Democratic Party in the United States, with the Labour Party in Britain and with the Social Democrats in Germany.

"Thus (alliance between a political party and major trade unions) is nothing unheard of," Hamutenya continued.

"It is not undemocratic. I also believe that the unions should be free to choose. If they want to affiliate to another party, they are free to do so."

These are welcome words to

some Namibians. But in many ways they are rather meaningless at this point.

The debate has started only now — four years after independence. In the meantime, unemployment and urbanisation have risen rapidly. Unofficial figures give unemployment at nearly 50 percent and rising, but no official figures are available.

In addition, the membership of the NUNW is divided. The opposition parties in parliament have crumbled. There is little evidence of plurality left in the young country, where remarkable peace and tolerance reigns on the surface.

And diplomatic and political observers agree that Swapo might make a clean sweep in the next general election, due in November 1994.

For the unions, independence may then be too late.

Strike: Riot police called in

WINDHOEK — Riot police were called in yesterday to bolster local police on the third day of a wage strike by Namibian diamond miners

A spokesman for De Beers Consolidated Diamond Mines (CDM) said local police could no longer control the situation in southern Namibia. Miners were blocking access to some mines

and telephone lines had been cut

The strike, which involves 3 500 of the total work force of 4 587 people, has closed down three mining operations since Monday, CDM said

Mr Peter Naholo, general secretary of the Mineworkers' Union of Namibia, criticised the government for sending in riot

ET 18/11/2022 93
police. Such action, he said, "would serve to politicise a labour dispute"

Meanwhile a revised wage offer of 9,5% by CDM yesterday, has been called a bid to defuse a potentially explosive situation

CDM executive director Mr Abel Gower said picket lines were still plagued by "armed rogue elements" — Sapa, Own Correspondent

Namibian govt intervenes in CDM strike

NAMIBIA's government yesterday intervened in the strike at De Beers Centenary AG group's Consolidated Diamond Mines, sending in riot police to bolster local police and halt violence on the picket lines

And in its bid to defuse the explosive situation at the three striking mines, CDM increased its wage offer to 9,5% from 8,5%, executive director Abel Gower said

Sapa-AP reports that Namibian Mines and Energy Minister Andimba Toivo ya Toivo said Namibia could not afford a prolonged strike as the mining sector was vital to its welfare CDM accounted for

ERICA JANKOWITZ

13% of GDP and 36% of exports in 1992 Gower said picket lines were still plagued by "armed rogue elements" intent on violence and intimidation in defiance of Monday's court order Investor confidence could be affected and police had been asked to step up their intervention

CDM was Namibia's "most important company" and had been effectively held to ransom Miners were blocking access to some mines and telephone lines had been cut At least six people had been hurt

Mineworkers' Union of Namibia (MUN) general secretary Peter Naholo said the riot police "would politicise what was essentially a labour dispute" MUN spokesman Hofmi Ipunge said the union had exercised its right to "persuade workers peacefully" not to work (222)

Gower said informal talks with the union would continue, but would not comment on its allegation that management was referring to its principals in SA about improving its latest offer The company was waiting for the MUN's response The union did not decrease its 15% demand.

Miners pledge to halt assaults

WINDHOEK. — Striking miners at CDM in Oranjemund, have agreed in writing to adhere to a court interdict forbidding the intimidation or assault of non-strikers, paving the way for resumption of wage negotiations this week.

Striking workers last week assaulted and harassed staff reporting for work, causing CDM to break off wage negotiations. Non-striking workers were allegedly forced from their posts at knifepoint — Sapa

222
1/22/73

Strikers agree to comply

WINDHOEK — Striking miners at Consolidated Diamond Mines in Oranjemund have agreed in writing to adhere to a court interdict forbidding the intimidation or assault of non-strikers, paving the way for resumption of wage negotiations (22)

This followed an informal meeting on Saturday between mine management, the local branch of the Mine Workers' Union of Namibia and the National Union of Namibian Workers, CDM general manager Keith Whitelock said

He said the mine had accepted the unions' commitment to comply with the Labour Act and court order, but wanted clarification of what was meant by "peaceful picketing" Management also wanted guarantees that non-strikers be allowed to perform striking workers' functions Strikers last week assaulted staff reporting for work, causing CDM to break off wage negotiations — Sapa.

Miners' strike
in Namibia ends

Windhoek — Striking workers and Consolidated Diamond Mines agreed in principle to end a two-week strike on Sunday night, and on a wage increase of 10 percent, CDM and the Mineworkers Union of Namibia said yesterday. 30/11/93

The 3 500 MUN members on strike returned to work at midnight on Sunday, and the mines were reportedly fully operational yesterday. (222)

The agreement to end the strike was expected to be signed yesterday morning.

MUN president John Shattonhodi said skilled workers had won a 1 percent merit increment in addition to a basic 10 percent increase backdated to June. He said the strike had strengthened the union, proved worker unity and promoted confidence in the MUN. — Sapa.

Diamond workers to end two-week strike

WINDHOEK — Striking workers and Consolidated Diamond Mines had agreed in principle to end a two-week strike and on a wage increase of 10%, the Mineworkers Union of Namibia (MUN) said yesterday.

Over 3 500 MUN members returned to work at midnight on Sunday, and the Oranjemund and satellite mines were reportedly almost fully operational yesterday.

MUN president Mr John Shaetonhodi said the strike had strengthened the union, proved worker unity and promoted workers' confidence. — Sapa

Namibian strike ends.

WINDHOEK — Striking workers and Consolidated Diamond Mines have agreed in principle to end a two-week strike and on a wage increase of 10 percent, the company and the Mineworkers Union of Namibia have said. (22)

The 3 500 union members on strike returned to work at midnight on Sunday and the Oranjemund and satellite mines were reported to be fully operational on Monday. *ARL 2/12/93*

Union president John Shaetonhodi said skilled workers won a one percent merit increment in addition to a basic 10 percent increase backdated to June.

He said the strike had strengthened the union, proved worker unity and promoted confidence in the union among its members, who won a larger increase than workers not in the bargaining unit — Sapa

Walvis Bay teachers go on 'strike'

ARC 22/2/94 (222)

JOHN-VILJOEN
Education Reporter

CLASSES have come to a halt for more than 1 600 House of Representatives pupils in Walvis Bay as teachers protest over uncertainties surrounding next week's handover to Namibia

De Duine Secondary School principal Eddie van Wyk said teachers had suspended classes until the department gave them clarity about their fate after the enclave's incorporation on Monday

About 970 primary school and 660 high school pupils are affected by the action by 70 teachers at De Duine and Narraville Primary schools

There had been no written confirmation from the Department of Education and Culture, House of Representatives, as to how the

schools would function from March 1, he said

Teachers did not know whether they would be seconded to other schools in South Africa or whether they would leave the department with an early retirement package

"We are completely in the dark," he said Teachers want department officials to fly to Walvis Bay today to discuss their grievances

Education minister Pieter Saaiman was in Walvis Bay last week, but only to hand out service certificates and not to address teachers' fears

Mr Van Wyk said many teachers had made their lives in Walvis Bay and were uncertain what would happen to their housing subsidies and other commitments

Virtually every government department, except the Department of Education and Culture, House of Representatives, had told employees in writing of their fate once the enclave became part of Namibia

This applied to teaching colleagues employed in Walvis Bay by other departments It was possible Namibia would offer employment to some teachers in June but this had not been confirmed

Department spokeswoman Theresha Hanekom said the teachers had been

assured their service conditions were protected at least until December 31

Agreement on the rights and privileges of all state employees in Walvis Bay was reached only late last week, she said

Unions to take govt to court

Sapa 27/7/95 (222)

Windhoek — Namibia's trade unions are set to take the government to court if it does not amend legislation aimed at attracting foreign investment

The umbrella National Union of Namibian Workers said yesterday that it has given the government three

weeks to promise to drop an "offensive" clause from the Export Processing Zone Act, which was passed in March

The Act established an export processing zone at Walvis Bay in which no trade union activity will be allowed

— Sapa.

GERHARDT KATJIRE knows that the cost of justice could be his job — in a country where up to half the working population is unemployed

"Just to air my views will cost me very dearly in the future," he told trade union investigators preparing evidence against some of Africa's most repressive employers

Some cases include allegations of lingering slavery. Katjire's story includes the death of his son.

"I, Katjire, have witnessed three people who got sick and died on this plot without any help from (the owner)," said his statement. "One was my own child, Bennie Makanga, aged seven years."

When he told his employer the boy was sick, he was sent back to work. He was not allowed inside his master's house to telephone for help. A neighbour promised to take the boy to hospital, but never arrived. The police were not called until the following day.

Katjire said "I did not go with the boy (to hospital) for fear of losing my job. My son died on arrival at the hospital in Mariental."

He asked his employer for R400 to help him buy a coffin. The employer said: "What do you think I am, a bloody bank?"

He gave Katjire his monthly allowance of R125. "I took the money offered and walked back to Mariental, arranged for the coffin and funeral, and came back with the police after burying my son," said Katjire. "At the end of the month the R125 was subtracted from my allowance, which is actually only the food ration."

"If the employer's dog gets sick or lost then we, the labourers don't sleep or eat until we find it." The owner had demolished toilets built by his predecessor, Katjire said, "and told us to use the bushes."

The first concerted campaign to unionise Namibian farmworkers, who make up more than half the labour force, will be launched this year. Bernhard Esau, general secretary of the National Union of Namibian Workers, expects court action will be needed to gain access to many farmworkers and inform them of their rights.

His union, like others, is still waiting for progress on labour affairs, although national independence was achieved in March 1990, after almost 20 years of "the struggle." "There's no progress, as far as labour matters are concerned it's worse (since independence)," he said.

Seven unions based in a single-storey office complex attempt to improve the working lives of their 87 600 members in an economy which has yet to prove itself. Esau contrasts the "formal" working population of about 150 000 with the "informal sector" of between 350 000 and 400 000, which includes the



Trapped in poverty A community meeting at a village in Namibia, where union leaders believe legal action will be needed to tell workers their rights. WM 7-13/1/94 (222)

Independent, but Namibia's workers aren't free yet

Two years after independence, pitiful wages, long hours, unemployment and poverty abound in Namibia, reports **Martyn Halsall**

rural workforce

Trade union estimates suggest unemployment is between 40 and 50 percent of the "formal" workforce possibly 70 000 to 80 000 people. Youth unemployment is at crisis levels. Seventy percent of the population is aged below 80. By 2005 the population under 30 will equal the country's total population now. Every year some 16 000 young people enter a labour market offering only 4 000 jobs in the formal sector.

Education and training remain dreams to be accomplished. Illiteracy is estimated at between 65 and 70 percent among over-15s. Many children never go to school, many who begin never complete their courses.

About 24 000 will sit Grade 10 examinations this year, competing for 11 000 places for Grade 11. "The remaining 13 000 will join the swelling ranks of the unemployed," said an Anglican Church report.

Namibia's historic reliance on South Africa, and that republic's uncertainties, further impair

prospects. And internally, Namibia's wealth distribution is estimated to be the most imbalanced in Africa.

The richest five percent of the population account for 71 percent of the Gross National Product and the poorest 55 percent for only three percent. Some 55 percent of the population are "absolutely poor" according to the Unicef classification. The poorest 95 percent of the population have an annual income of only R2 375.

Namibia replaced white domination without revolution — but has yet to radicalise society. Delegates at a national unemployment conference, organised by the churches, complained at lingering racism both at worship and at work. Only two cars stood outside one northern bush church with a congregation of 800 on a typical Sunday, one a gleaming Jaguar owned by a millionaire supermarket tycoon. He was one of three such church members in an area with a mean average income of around R225 a year.

Most farmers in this part of Owamboland where 80 percent of the rapidly rising population depends on the rural economy, live on plots of between two and five hectares. The population is set to double to 1.23 million by 2014, endangering the advance of prosperity according to an international report.

"Unless a progressive and successful family planning programme is initiated, all efforts to raise living standards will fall as economic gains are absorbed by the increasing numbers of people."

More crowded, but no richer, than the rural areas are former black townships like Katutura, outside Windhoek.

Migrant labourers drift south into this shanty town of sun-blasted dust and flimsy shelters of plastic tin cans and plywood. More settled residents live eight or 10 in brick, tin-roofed prefabs. The Swapo flag flutters over crowded alleys. The township's name defines its people's transience: "We have no dwelling-place."

Some 87 000 people live in Katutura, and the population is set to double every 10 years. "Social problems abound and flourish: boredom, teenage alcoholism, violence and vandalism," said a church report.

The Evangelical Lutheran and

Anglican churches have formed a partnership with the private sector to answer social despair with economic enterprise. A project team will work to meet the area's "colossal" needs in co-operation with a board of trustees chaired by the Youth and Sport Minister and including the Finnish ambassador and the national Unicef representative.

It was the churches which gave a special platform to the unemployed during their three-day national conference on the future of work in Namibia. Delegates warned that unemployment levels were "desperate". There were calls for more government action to create work, end nepotism and outlaw racism. Migrant and refugee labour was also cited in a catalogue of problems.

Sarah, an unemployed woman, complained: "People are coming from South Africa and taking the bread out of our mouths."

Gaus Shikomba, who spent 18 years as a South African prisoner on Robben Island for Swapo membership — and who is now dependent on his wife's small income as a church pastor — suggested refugees displaced by the independence struggle should be given six months to return to their old employment.

There were calls for action to control multi-national companies alleged to be creating an economic imbalance in a country rich in raw materials.

Delegates were warned to expect no easy solutions. Maximum efforts by non-governmental organisations would not match the need for jobs. Labour-intensive projects in the private and public sectors are needed.

For people like Matthew working in the labour-intensive farming industry such statements sound ironic. He earns R200 a month, works 12 hour days and is forced to buy food from his employer's store. This leaves 70 cents a month.

"I have become a pauper or a slave," he said. "I am forced to work for food and I am unable to clothe and support my family."

"Work is scarce and I am afraid to leave," he told supporters assembling the case for unionisation of the agricultural workers. "His (the owner's) plot is the only shelter I have got and the food I get from work."

"These white farmers never treated us the way they are doing today. Is it because Swapo has brought independence to Namibia?" — The Guardian

"If the employer's dog gets sick or lost, then we, the labourers, don't sleep or eat until we find it."

Namibian workers still have far to go

By Protasius Ndauendapo

WHILE there has been an improvement in conditions of Namibian workers since independence six years ago, much remains to be done, especially for domestic and farm workers

Ranga Haikali, acting general secretary of the National Union of Namibian Workers says inflation of about eight percent and an unemployment rate of 22 percent of the workforce have brought further hardships

Labour Relations Act

He says the enactment of the Labour Relations Act in 1992 and the setting-up of district labour courts has been positive. But the working and living conditions of domestic and farm workers are poor. They are not in line with conditions prescribed by the LRA," says Haikali.

He calls on employers to ensure that the conditions of their workers conform to the Act. Haikali says there are only 25 labour inspectors and more must be appointed to see that conditions are improved.

The attitude of management in middle to big companies in the urban areas has improved but in small companies

Conditions for domestic and farm workers have not improved enough

Working and living conditions for domestic and farm workers are poor. They are not in line with those prescribed by the LRA

and the rural areas change is needed

Doufi Namalambo, a gender researcher at the Legal Assistance Centre in the Windhoek, says "Neither workers nor employers are doing enough to improve the labour situation."

She says before independence the situation was better because the workers were more militant. But since then everybody has "folded their hands and hoped everything would fall into place."

Namalambo says the situation of domestic workers, most of whom are illiterate, is poor because their union is weak and is not yet recognised by

employers. There is a need to revive a commission of inquiry into the socio-economic conditions of the domestic and farm workers, she says. The commission was set up in 1995, but stopped work recently due to cash shortages.

Namibian Employers Federation president Mike Hill says "We understand as employers that workers want more money, but we also understand that we have to generate that money. "If we want to live in a high-income country, then all of us have to work towards that."

Training courses

He says the federation is running training courses for its members to help them understand labour practices.

Acting labour commissioner Tuulikhe Ngehishakwa says there are still some companies that pay their employees starvation wages. Others unfairly dismiss workers.

But she adds, the drop in the number of strikes in the past year is an indication that conditions of workers are improving. — *Africa Information Afrique*

Sowetan 13/5/96 222

'Chaos' as strike halts (222) mines in Namibia

APG 24/8/96

WINDHOEK - About 1300 strikers at three Namibian copper mines have brought work to a halt over a pay dispute

Tsumeb Corporation Limited spokesman Dermot Whyte said yesterday that union employees had taken over control of all essential services for mining operations at Otjihase, Tsumeb and Kombat copper mines on Thursday

"It is a state of chaos," he said

The company obtained a court interdict on Thursday night to prevent miners from entering operational areas

Police were struggling yesterday to enforce the interdict as striking Mineworkers Union of Namibia members were still on the premises

Mr Whyte described the situation as serious

"Basically Tsumeb is in jeopardy. That is the bottom line," he said

The strike started after a deadlock in protracted wage negotiations

The union is demanding a 13,5 percent pay rise, while the company has offered an average of 8,9 percent

"TCL has shown restraint from the word go by complying rigorously with all conditions of the Labour Act," Mr Whyte said

The MUN was not available for comment - Sapa

Tsumeb hit by explosion

(222)

WINDHOEK — An explosion on Saturday afternoon rocked the smelter plant at the Tsumeb copper mine in northern Namibia. **BD 26/8/96**

Picketing strikers were said to be preventing officials from determining whether anyone was injured in the explosion, or the extent of the damage.

"We do not know the extent of the damage ... we do not know if anyone has been injured. There were people down at the smelter," Tsumeb Corporation spokesman Dermot Whyte told Namibian Broadcasting Corporation television on Saturday night.

About 1 300 Mineworkers' Union of Namibia members at three TCL copper and lead mines downed tools at midday on Thursday. The company employs about 2 500 workers.

The strike is in support of a 13,5% wage demand. TCL, owned by Gold Fields Namibia, offered average increases of 8,9%.

On Thursday night the company obtained a Labour Court interdict preventing strikers from entering mine property.

Seven people were reportedly injured in clashes with police trying to enforce the court order.

The MUN could not be reached for comment.

Whyte said the smelter plant had been down for 48 hours and the next 12 hours would be critical. — Sapa.

Tsumeb smelter plant blasted during strike

AN EXPLOSION on Saturday afternoon rocked the smelter plant at the Tsumeb copper mine in northern Namibia, but picketing strikers were said to be preventing officials from determining the extent of the damage and if there were any injuries, a spokesman for Tsumeb Corporation Ltd said

About 1 300 Mineworkers' Union of Namibia members at three TCL copper and lead mines downed tools at midday on Thursday **BD 26/8/96**

Strikers are demanding a 13,5% wage increase, but TCL, owned by Gold Fields Namibia, is offering average increases of 8,9%. The union could not be reached for comment. The spokesman said the smelter plant had been down for 48 hours and the next 12 hours would be critical for the mine **Page 7**

Strikes mar good year for Tsumeb Corp

David McKay

BASE metals producer Gold Fields Namibia's Tsumeb Corporation is facing revenue losses of about N\$7,5m so far due to a strike which entered its eighth day yesterday.

Corporation chairman Clive Wolfe-Coote said 450 tons of copper production had been lost during the days workers had been on strike

The strike, the result of a deadlock in wage talks, has affected the corporation's three operating mines at Tsumeb, Otjase and Kombat

The copper, worth N\$4m, accounts for 68% of Gold Fields Namibia's total revenue. The company also produces lead and a small amount of silver.

A similar tonnage of lead production has also been lost, worth around N\$1,7m, as the strike disabled all but the most essential services at the mines.

Gold Fields had served a court order on the Mineworkers Union of Namibia but no breakthrough had been achieved so far, said Wolfe-Coote.

Referring to an explosion which rocked the copper smelter at Tsumeb last Saturday, the company said it did not expect the smelter to operate for "a considerable period of time" due to "extensive damage".

Wolfe-Coote said it was too early to estimate the cost of the damage as management had not been able

to get access to the plant. He said, however, that flooding at Kombat and Otjase, due to a temporary halting of pumping services, was now under control.

But at Tsumeb, water rapidly flooding the mine's underground works threatened to pollute the water table in the northern area of Namibia.

Although it was impossible to gauge the impact of the strike on the corporation's bottom line, Wolfe-Coote said it had marred an outstanding year so far.

Gold Fields Namibia reported a surging taxed profit of R12m (R111 000) in the June quarter. It was also lauded as a strong contributor to parent company Gold Fields of SA's results in the year to June

3 (222)
BD 30/8/96

Strikers surrender Tsumeb smelters

~~(222)~~ (222)
WINDHOEK — Gold Fields Namibia said yesterday it would resume mediation efforts with striking workers after regaining control on Wednesday of mine and smelter operations at Tsumeb.

A spokesman said that about 1 000 non-striking workers out of a work force of 2 500 had returned at the site in northern Namibia following the strikers' decision to surrender control.

The group's Tsumeb Corp Ltd (TCL) mines in northern Namibia and its copper smelter have been shut down since August 23 when Mineworkers' Union of Namibia members took control of key areas. The lead smelter, which was shut down before the strike, has also been out of commission.

The strike is costing TCL about 80 tons a day in lost copper production and a similar amount in lost lead. The company is now assessing damage to property.

The copper smelter was extensively damaged and is likely to take six to eight weeks to repair. The lead smelter did not appear to be damaged but will take two to three weeks to restart. TCL produced just under 30 000 tons of blister copper last year and 27 000 tons of lead — Reuter.

BD 13/7/96

Namibian union to address labour court

(222)
The 26-day-old strike at Gold Fields Namibia's Tsumeb operations continues in the labour court in Windhoek as both parties make applications to it. Justice Annel Silungwe, the court's president, ruled yesterday that the court would first hear the Mineworkers' Union of Namibia's response to last month's court order declaring the strike illegal.
— Sapa, Windhoek

CT(BR) 18/9/96

Mine security staff and dogs 'trapped without food'

(222) B D 3/10/96

UP TO 30 security workers and their dogs at Namibian copper mine Tsumeb Corporation Ltd were trapped by armed strikers and had been without food since Monday, mine manager Tony de Beer said yesterday.

He said that the 25 to 30 security workers had been blockaded by armed members of the Mineworkers' Union of Namibia at the Tsumeb site since last Thursday.

"They have been there since

Thursday and the food ran out on Monday about 5pm," De Beer said by telephone from his house, which has been blockaded by strikers since Tuesday morning.

The union had said that the workers could leave, but only if they submitted a list of their names, and strikers had not allowed food into the mine, De Beer said.

He said that he ventured out in his car yesterday to meet the mayor of Tsumeb and discuss the cri-

sis. Six or seven armed strikers were outside his house — his wife and youngest son were with him — and he would not be venturing out again.

"I presume they (the strikers) won't do anything, but you can't trust them," he said.

Mediation efforts to end the bitter six-week dispute broke down last Thursday and the strike took a violent twist at the weekend when armed strikers gained control of the group's three mines —

Otjohase, Kombat and Tsumeb.

Namibian government ministers visited Kombat and Tsumeb yesterday to ask the strikers to put down their weapons. These included shotguns, pangas, knobkerries and whips. They visited Otjohase on Tuesday.

But the pleas of the mines minister and the labour minister did not succeed. A spokesman for mine owner Gold Fields of Namibia said the situation had not changed and armed strikers were

still in control of all three mines.

"Nothing has changed," he said, describing the atmosphere as "terribly, terribly tense".

A hospital, occupied by the strikers on Monday and later closed down, has reopened.

The strike over pay began with Tsumeb offering a 7% rise and the union wanting 14.5%. A new pay offer, aimed at settling the dispute or, at least, restarting mediation is to be put forward by Friday.

Tsumeb mines and smelters

have been shut down since August 23 when mine union members began their strike.

The strike is costing Tsumeb about 80 tons a day in lost copper production and a similar amount in lost lead.

Tsumeb produced just less than 30 000 tons of blister copper last year and 27 000 tons of lead. Most of the lead was produced from brought-in material, while copper output was from Tsumeb mines. — Reuter

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Union report shows Namibian farm workers have yet to reap benefits of independence

Exploitation still reigns down on the farm

ABSALOM SHIGWEDHA

GRAPHIC: JAMES DE VILLIERS

Windhoek — Namibian farm workers are paid miserable salaries, unlawfully fired without compensation, housed in shacks and generally exploited, according to the findings of a recent survey by the Namibia Farmworkers' Union (Nafwu).

The survey found that most of the farm workers in Namibia are unaware of the Labour Act which protects their rights and interests, and as a result have suffered unnecessarily poor working conditions and payment.

In reaction to the findings Nafwu is calling for a minimum wage for farm workers and the formation of a permanent body to investigate their working conditions. It has recommended that a permanent wage commission be established to look into the remuneration of all farm workers in the country.

The union has also called on the commission to review the situation on an annual basis, taking into account the inflation rate and the cost of living. Nafwu described low salaries as "exploitation", saying this



should have changed in independent Namibia.

According to the Nafwu survey, the average cash wage paid to permanent farm workers was N\$116,12 per month, with an additional ration pack to the value of N\$239,37 which brought the total to N\$395,39 per month. The average cash wage paid to

temporary farm workers in mid-1995 was N\$130 per month, while one out of four earned N\$150 or less per month. About three per cent of farm workers earned less than N\$50 per month in cash.

The union also found that farm workers were excluded from the government's programmes to provide better hous-

ing for all Namibians. It recommended that government and employers should deal with the unacceptable housing situation on farms.

"All shacks and other impoverished dwellings should be systematically phased out within the next five years. The government should encourage employers to

build decent houses by the provision of tax incentives and low interest housing loans," Nafwu recommended.

On health and safety matters, the survey showed that about 5,5 percent of farm workers are not provided with protective clothing like overalls and boots. Nafwu urged the ministry of labour to implement the health and safety provision of the Labour Act without further delay.

As a number of farm workers were not registered with the Social Security Commission (SSC), they had been denied basic rights such as sick leave, maternity leave and death benefits.

Namibia's SSC, the first ever in Africa, requires all employers to register their companies and their employees with the SSC. Employees, through their employers, then pay a monthly amount to the SSC to help employees when they are sick or on maternity leave.

Nafwu said the SSC should pay special attention to the registration of employers and workers in the agricultural sector. Farm owners, for instance, had violated the country's constitution by em-

ploying children on their farms, according to Nafwu. There were about 500 children under the age of 15 working on farms, which is against both the Labour Act and the constitution. Nafwu recommended that government should impose heavy penalties on employers who hired minors.

Unfair dismissal by farm owners was also cited as a problem experienced by farm workers. "You do not get anything if you are dismissed. You will be asked to sign a document which you do not know. Then you will be chased away with no pay," complained one farm worker at Grootfontein.

The commission of inquiry into labour-related matters affecting agricultural employers and domestic workers was appointed by President Sam Nujoma last year.

Chairman of the commission and deputy speaker of the National Assembly, Dr Zephania Kamceta, who received the Nafwu survey report, said he would hand over the report to Nujoma on May 1 — Independent Foreign Service/Africa Information Afrique

(222) ET (Bar) 414 | 97

Unnecessary suffering for Namibia's farm workers

CP 30/3/97

(222)

NAMIBIAN farm workers are paid miserable salaries, they are unlawfully fired without compensation, housed in shacks and generally exploited, according to the findings of a survey by the Namibia Farm Workers' Union (Nafwu)

The survey found that the majority of farm workers in Namibia were unaware of the Labour Act - which protects their rights and interests - and as a result have suffered unnecessarily with regard to working conditions and salaries

As a result of the findings, Nafwu is calling for a minimum wage for farm workers and the formation of a permanent body to consider their terms and investigate their conditions

It has recommended that a permanent wage commission be established to look into the situation and the remuneration of all farm workers in the country.

"The commission should consist of an equal number of representatives from farm workers and employers, with a government representative in the chair," said Nafwu

The union has also called on the commission to review the situation on an annual basis in all 13 regions of the country, taking into account the inflation rate and the cost of living.

Nafwu condemned the low salaries of farm workers and described it as "exploitation", saying this should have changed in independent Namibia.

The union said it was clear from the survey that the majority of farm workers were getting very low wages, which could no longer be tolerated

According to the recent Nafwu survey, the average cash wage paid to permanent farm workers is 116,12 Namibian dollars (R116,12) per month, with an additional ration pack to the value of 239,37 Namibian dollars (R239,37) - which brings the total to 345,49 Namibian dollars (R345,49) per month

The average cash wage paid to temporary farm workers in mid-1995 was 130 Namibian dollars (R130) per month, while some 25 percent of farm workers earned

FARM workers get short shrift in Namibia, according to the Namibia farm workers' union (Nafwu). Many are paid a pittance and live in squalor, constantly fearing sudden dismissal. AIA reports.

150 Namibian dollars (R150) or less per month

About three percent of farm workers earned less than 50 Namibian dollars (R50) per month in cash.

"I am not paid for overtime work I leave my children alone at home and I am concerned about their safety My family members are not allowed to visit me," says a woman farm worker at Dorbabis, East of Windhoek

A farm worker in the Hardap region complains "I am employed at the plot I have a wife, and children of school-going age

"I am paid 400 Namibian dollars (R400) per month I worked for four years and need an increase, but the farmer does not agree "

The union also found that farm workers were excluded from the government's programmes to provide better housing for all Namibians

It recommended that government and employers deal with the unacceptable housing situation on farms

"All shacks and other impoverished dwellings should be systematically phased out within the next five years

"The government should encourage employers to build decent houses by the provision of tax incentives and low-interest housing loans," Nafwu recommended

On matters related to health and safety, the survey showed about 5,5 percent of

farm workers are not provided with protective clothing like overalls and boots

Nafwu therefore urged the Ministry of Labour to implement the health and safety provision of the Labour Act without further delay

"This will force employers to abide by the minimum health and safety requirements," said a farm worker at Grootfontein

A number of farm workers are not registered with the Social Security Commission (SSC), and this has denied them basic rights such as sick leave, maternity leave and death benefits

Namibia's SSC, the first ever in Africa, requires all employers to register their companies and their employees with the SSC Employees, through their employers, then pay an amount of money to the SSC every month

This money helps employees when they are sick or on maternity leave

Nafwu says the SSC should pay special attention to the registration of employers and workers in the agricultural sector. Farm owners have violated the country's constitution by employing children on their farms, according to Nafwu

There are about 500 children under the age of 15 working on farms - which is against both the Labour Act and the constitution

Here Nafwu recommends that government should impose heavy penalties

Unfair dismissals by the farm owners is also cited as a problem

"You do not get anything if you are dismissed," complains one Grootfontein farm worker

"You will be asked to sign a document, without knowing what it is Then you will be chased away with no pay."

The Commission of Inquiry into labour-related matters affecting agricultural employers and domestic workers was appointed by President Sam Nujoma last year.

Chairman of the Commission and deputy speaker of the National Assembly, Dr Zaphania Kamceta, who received Nafwu survey report, said he would hand the report over to Nujoma on May 1

Namibian mine unable to pay workers salaries

(bD 23/4/98 (222))

Christof Maletsky

WINDHOEK — Tsumeb Corporation is in such dire financial straits that it does not have the means to pay its employees' salaries at the end of this month, Hugh Robinson, MD of Tsumeb's owners, Gold Fields Namibia, says in an affidavit supporting an application to have the corporation wound up.

Robinson said that before last week's closure Tsumeb Corporation's management was planning extensive retrenchments to try to turn the company around.

Management was concerned that a failure to pay wages could lead to a repeat of the destructive 1996 strike and the dam-

aging of Tsumeb's assets. This was one of the reasons why the application for Tsumeb's winding up had to be heard as a matter of urgency, Robinson said.

About 2 000 employees are affected at Tsumeb's three mines, representing about 25% of Namibia's mining workforce.

In an affidavit filed with the High Court application, Robinson said Tsumeb had liabilities of R94,4m, which could balloon to R138,4m if the R44m cost of environmental rehabilitation obligations were added.

This compared to total assets worth R107m at "the most optimistic assessment." The company's monthly wage bill is more than R7m.

The government does not want the work-

ers retrenched and there is speculation that it may assist in keeping the company running. Mother company Gold Fields Namibia is also not seen as an immediate source of support.

According to Robinson's affidavit, Tsumeb owed R28,8m in loans at the end of last month of which R20m is owed to Gold Fields Namibia. About R37,8m is owed to other creditors. Tsumeb has recorded a total operating loss of R99,4m since 1994. Monthly operating losses average R5m.

The application has been postponed to next Wednesday to give the Namibian government and the Mineworkers' Union of Namibia time to file notices that they will oppose the intended winding up.

Salary negotiations deadlocked (222)

WINDHOEK — The two main bargaining unions representing 55 000 public servants in Namibia have reached deadlock with government in annual salary negotiations.

The Namibia Public Workers' Union and the Namibia National Teachers' Union said the matter had been referred to the labour commissioner's office. The unions dropped their demand to 12% for low-paid staff and 8% for relatively highly paid public servants, but said government was offering 8% for low-paid staff and 3% for the others.

BD 23/4/98
REPORTS Sapa-AFP, Own Correspondent

Cloud over Tsumeb as miners are sent home ⁽²²²⁾

CT (M) 8/5/98 (~~222~~)

FRAUKE JENSEN

Tsumeb — Residents of this small Namibian mining town face an uncertain future since Gold Fields of Namibia halted operations at three mines last month and sent 2 000 workers home until further notice

Mining has been the economic backbone of this northern town since the turn of the century. Residents say the closure of Gold Fields' Tsumeb Corporation will force an exodus of people and close businesses.

"What are we going to do here if the mine closes down? There really is nothing else," said Paula, whose husband is among the miners sent home.

"We knew that since the 1996 strike things weren't that well at the mine, but none of us expected this," she added, referring to a crippling six-week strike over pay and working conditions which cost Tsumeb about N\$60 million (about R60 million).

The losses were never completely recouped and the company is currently N\$99 million in the red.

Blaming weak copper prices, Gold Fields of Namibia halted production at Tsumeb's Kombat, Khusib Springs and Otjijhase mines and its lead smelter in Tsumeb.

The Namibia High Court last week placed Tsumeb Corporation under provisional liquidation and ordered it to indicate by May 29 why it should not be placed under final liquidation.

Since production was halted, the Mineworkers' Union of Namibia, the Namibian government and Gold Fields have been negotiating to try to avoid the complete shutdown of the mines. Activity in the town has shifted visibly into lower gear, one shopkeeper said.

"People are scared to spend money now because they don't know where their next pay cheque will come

from," he said, despite the announcement by Gold Fields of Namibia that Gold Fields of South Africa would pay the April salaries for Tsumeb's 2 000 employees.

"How do we know this is really true? They don't care about us, they just come and tell us to stop work. How am I going to feed my children?" asked Titus, a miner.

Tsumeb residents fear the town could become "a second Kolmanskop", a former diamond mining town now buried under sand dunes.

Tsumeb will not be the only town to lose out if the mines are closed. Major sea and land transport businesses, such as Namport and the TransNamib railroad, which carry ore to the smelter at Tsumeb, have indicated they may be forced to re-trench if Tsumeb closes.

Rossing Uranium, of Rio Tinto mining, receives all of its pyrite from Tsumeb and has announced it will have to go to the world market and import at far higher prices.

Namibia's labour market cannot afford Tsumeb's closure either. Sixty percent of the southern African country's 1,6 million people are already jobless or underemployed.

The closure of Tsumeb would mean a quarter of the workforce in the mining sector would be without work.

Independent analysts said the closure would affect the country's 1998-99 budget, currently under discussion in parliament.

National coffers stand to lose valuable foreign earnings despite the current low copper prices on the world market.

In 1997, income from the mining of copper, lead, pyrite, sulphur and cadmium at Tsumeb's mines came to a total of US\$45,5 million — Reuters

COMPANIES

'Sick' examiners to sue Tsumeb

Christof Maletsky

(222)

Ad 13/5/99

WINDHOEK — About 1 000 of mining firm Tsumeb Corporation's 1 930 retrenched employees were preparing to sue Tsumeb through parent Gold Fields SA as they were "suffering ill health linked to hazardous working conditions", a consultant on radiation and occupational diseases said this week.

The Windhoek-based doctor, Reinhard Zaire, is co-ordinating a legal fund for the claimants to sue for compensation.

He said R9m was raised for legal fees after approaches were made to concerned people in the UK and Germany.

Zaire said the recent closure and application for liquidation by Tsumeb Corporation would not deter workers from taking legal action against Gold Fields. He claimed that operations at Tsumeb's mines had damaged workers' health and destroyed the environment. As many as 70% of Tsumeb Corporation's employees were adversely affected.

A company spokesman said

the firm did not wish to comment on what it described as "unproven allegations".

Zaire said one pilot study had shown 23 of the 33 drillers employed at Tsumeb Corporation suffered from lung disease, occupationally induced hypertension and in the worst cases, tuberculosis. He also alleged the sudden closure of Tsumeb could result in toxic metals polluting the town of Tsumeb's underground water.

Government and the Mine-workers' Union of Namibia are challenging the decision to

liquidate Tsumeb Corporation. Negotiations are continuing between the union and Gold Fields Namibia on possible re-trenchment packages.

Union president Erno Ntinda said talks were tense as the parties differed strongly over proposed re-trenchment packages. It had, however, been confirmed that workers' pension contributions would be paid.

Gold Fields Namibia said it would need a cash injection from Gold Fields SA to honour a November 1996 re-trenchment agreement with the union.

Workers to take legal action against mine (222)

WINDHOEK - Last month's closure of mines Tsumeb Corporation Limited (TCL) Zaire also alleged that the end of operations at Tsumeb could lead to an environmental crisis with heavy and toxic metals polluting the town's underground water. Zaire also alleged that the end of operations at Tsumeb could lead to an environmental crisis with heavy and toxic metals polluting the town's underground water. Zaire also alleged that the end of operations at Tsumeb could lead to an environmental crisis with heavy and toxic metals polluting the town's underground water.

According to a report in yesterday's *Namibian*, a legal aid fund had already been established by concerned people in Britain and Germany. A pilot study had shown that 23 of the 33 drillers employed at TCL suffered from lung disease, occupational-induced hypertension and, in the worst cases, tuberculosis. Zaire said

Dr Reinhard Zaire, a consultant on radiation and occupational diseases, maintained that TCL's mining operations had resulted in damage to workers' health as well as destruction of the environment. "Since Namibia is receiving support from European activists, there is tangible hope that the compensation cases can be pursued," Zaire said

He claimed that the health of about 70 percent of TCL's employees had been adversely affected by conditions on the Sapa. President Sam Nujoma said although the closures were expected, they were a big blow to the country's economy which was faced with reducing unemployment - Sapa

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ET (PDR) 13/5/98 (722)

Ill miners prepare lawsuit against Tsumeb

Workers who stand to lose their jobs as Namibia's second largest mining group faces liquidation would sue the company because bad working conditions had left many of them ill, a consultant said here yesterday. The jobs of about 2,000 miners at Tsumeb Corporation are in the balance. About 70 percent of these workers suffered ill-health linked to hazardous working conditions at Tsumeb, said Richard Zaire, a radiation and occupational disease consultant. The workers will sue Tsumeb for damages through its parent companies, Gold Fields of Namibia and Gold Fields of South Africa. — AFP Windhoek

Tsumeb mineworkers get retrenchment deal

(222)

TSUMEB - Employees of the provisionally liquidated Tsumeb Corporation Limited will receive retrenchment pay outs in terms of a deal hammered out on Wednesday between the Mineworkers' Union of Namibia and Tsumeb's majority shareholder, Gold Fields SA.

In terms of the deal, the workers will be paid one month's basic wages.

They will also receive their leave pay and pro-rata leave bonus due to them when Tsumeb was provisionally liquidated on April 2, a Namibian newspaper reported yesterday.

They will be paid one week's wages for each year of service and in addition a week's wages for each of the first four years of service with the company, the report said.

Tsumeb workers who lost their jobs will be given preference in being offered new employment with the same pay as at the date of the provisional liquidation if any of the companies in the Gold Fields group decides before April 29 next year to resume operations at any Tsumeb mine.

The spokesman for the six appointed liquidators, Des Mathews, said that the liquidators would ask the Windhoek High Court today to postpone the possible final liquidation of Tsumeb for another three months.

Mathews and his fellow liquidators were last Friday granted permission by Judge Pro Teck to sell certain non-core assets of Tsumeb in an effort to generate cash. The liquidators need about N\$2m a month.

The money is required to finance the company's administrative costs and to preserve its assets, as well as to pay a monthly N\$1m to N\$1.5m electricity account which is required to ensure that water is continuously pumped from Tsumeb, Kombat and Otjihese mines to keep the mines from flooding. — Sapa

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Mine offers staff early retirement packages

Christof Maletsky

WINDHOEK — Haunted by recession, Rossing Uranium is offering voluntary early retirement packages to employees in a bid to shed 200 of them in 15 months.

Corporate affairs officer Hella Froese said "voluntary departure packages" were also in the pipeline if the early retirement offer failed to speed up the cutbacks.

Sources at the mine said Rossing, 60km east of Swakopmund, was struggling after being stuck in a fairly long-term trough.

Froese said forced retrenchments were not envisaged, but the consistently depressed uranium market had made it necessary to bring production costs down. Rossing did not envisage a return

to full production until 2002

The voluntary retirement packages offer employees the option of retiring at 60 or 62. Letters outlining retirement options have been sent to employees and allow for a three-month decision period.

Froese emphasised there would be no forced retirements. A brief sent out by Rossing in August also addressed rumours circulating among the labour force that a 1991-style mass retrenchment operation was on the way.

Vice-information and publicity officer for the Mineworkers' Union of Namibia at Rossing, Rudolph Isaak, said the brief had helped allay fears to some extent. But, he said, the union had not been fully included in formulating the measures thought necessary to cope

with the uranium slump

"We have been made aware over a long period of time that the company is facing problems, but we have not been involved in the discussion of strategies."

While only "the old and sick" were being courted to leave the company, the rest of the labour force could be targeted at a later stage, he said. Isaak said in its last significant round of shedding jobs in 1991, Rossing retrenched about 800 workers.

Froese said Rossing was aware that employees and the local community feared future retrenchments. However, every effort was being made to allay these fears. Rossing was "not struggling to stay afloat", but it was "having to work hard to stay in business".
