

CONDITIONS TODAY

We still have this compound system today. We see it in the mines, in the sugar mills and in some factories. Men leave their wives and children for a long time. The land is often neglected because there are not enough people to farm it properly. There is less food and cattle.

BROKEN PROMISES CAUSE STRIKES

At the beginning of 1973 the management of Ropes and Mattings in Jacobs (which is part of the Frame Group) promised workers a 50c increase. This same promise has been the cause of a strike which took place in March this year.

INCREASES

Near the end of 1973 and again in 1974 workers received increases. At the same time a new factory was under construction. Later when workers were moved to this new factory their wages were reduced. Management said that the machines in the old factory vacated by workers would not be restored. But a short while later new workers were employed to work these machines also at a lower rate than before. The management had reduced wages to cover the cost of the new plant and at the same time to keep their profits the same.

BROKEN PROMISES

Again management were using their power to regulate workers' jobs and pay. So workers in Romatix demanded that management give them the 50 cents promised a long time ago, because their wages were worth less. Management rejected this demand. They had decided to cut off negotiations. So workers went on strike.

Once again it was a strike which shook management into negotiations. When will they learn? Management agreed to give the 50 cents increase. But, as usual, they set conditions to this increase. They changed the number of shifts from three to two and said they would retrench 66 workers in exchange.

One of our leaders was on the list for retrenchment. When he asked workers to help him they said "Leaders are always fired after a strike". He was not fired but shifted to another department as were the others threatened with entrenchment.

ARE LEADERS WORTH 50 CENTS?

Some workers and Union organisers think that this is not good policy for workers. They agree that workers were right to make their demands for an increase but the 50 cents would quickly be lost to deductions and by price rises. Also no one would act as a spokesman for workers demands if there is a chance they can be fired. What do workers think about this? What policy should workers adopt in a situation such as this?

POSTSCRIPT

Members of the National Textile Workers Union have rejected the Frame Groups' conditions for workers and have voted to send their officials back to try and negotiate again.