

A TALK ABOUT THE WORKERS OF LUPINI BROS.

We are now going to talk about the workers of Lupini Brothers, whose factory was founded by three brothers; who came from Italy penniless. But they were gifted in manufacturing terrazo. But, because Italy is a small country and there is too much competition, they got suggestions, from their friends who were already in Africa, to leave Italy and come to establish their business here. They arrived in Beira in 1933 with only five shillings in their pockets plus of course a few tools.

In 1940 they moved to Johannesburg where they opened up another factory and employed workers as they were by now capitalists. At that time there were no workers' organisations and the workers were untrained. In 1946 the Lupini brothers came to Cape Town to open another factory, the second in South Africa. They opened their factory in Woodstock. They also employed workers.

While we still had the workers who were employed when the Woodstock factory was started, we were fortunate to be given Works Committee as our machinery for negotiating with our employers. We are also very grateful to the Advice Bureau for the lead it has taken. The organiser of the Advice Bureau visited us in February, 1975. We then decided to form our Works Committee. We also requested somebody to train us. We were given a certain white gentleman, who happens to be very sympathetic, very understanding, patient and clear in explanations. He has shown us all the channels of building mutual co-operation between the workers and the employers.

It was not an easy job to form our Works Committee, strong opposition came from an African clerk in the factory who saw the formation of this Works Committee as a threat to his job. They tried to discredit the six officials of our Works Committee but eventually all the workers accepted the Works Committee.

This Works Committee has succeeded in putting an end to beatings and abuses. The workers now get their pay weekly instead of fortnightly and ten minutes before we knock off instead of getting pay after knock off time. We are also satisfied with our overtime pay. The Works Committee has also succeeded in adjusting public holiday pay. Our employer has also promised an increase of 10c to 56½ which comes up to R4,00. He has also promised this increase after every two months.

Today we take our hats off to the Advice Bureau - we salute it!! today, we also salute Zora Mehlomakulu for patience and hard work in trying to help the unfortunate workers of this country. We wish all the workers of the Western Cape success. They must help their Works Committees in order to help themselves.

DANGERS THREATEN THE WORKERS' COUNCIL

It is sad fact, but true, that wherever the workers are trying to better their conditions, some clever gentlemen will appear on the scene, first to "lead" the workers, then to confuse them, then to mislead them, and finally to betray them.

The Workers' Council is not specially protected from this danger. It is only too easy for power hungry opportunists to fake their loyalty to the workers and thus gain election to the Workers' Council, or more likely, they do not risk elections, but simply arrive at the Workers' Council the self-appointed delegates of their factory.

With clever gestures and silver tongues, they will try and divert the workers from their tasks. When the workers want to take action, these pompous gentlemen will propose letter-writing. When the workers want to help fellow-workers fighting the boss, these gentlemen will take refuge behind long speeches to propose "caution".

Such are the men who would kill the Workers' Council with their "kindness". The only protection against such confusion-mongers is vigilance. Do not leave all the decisions to your delegates; make sure you know what they are saying in the Workers' Council; make sure that you are not ignorant of all Law, so that these gentlemen can outwit you; make sure that your delegates are completely under your control, with no grand ideas about their own importance. And above all - elect only those fellow-workers who you can trust to press forward the workers' struggle.

MATANZIMA REJECTS TRADE UNIONS

The Chief Minister of the Transkei, Kaiser Matanzima, has at last made it clear what his opinions about trade unions are. In a speech last month, he said:

"My government has consistently taken the stand that trade unions, with all their potential disruption, are undesirable and even harmful in a developing country".

It is worth noting a number of things. Firstly, the Minister of Labour, Mr. Marais Viljoen, proudly used this speech of Kaiser Matanzima's in the Parliamentary debate on labour.

It seems that Kaiser Matanzima's stand agrees with National Party policy.

In the same debate in Parliament it was mentioned that top executives in Anglo-American were also not in favour of trade-unions, and it was said that South Africa's system of labour relations was ideal for South Africa.

MEMBERSHIP CARDS NOW BEING USED

At long last, the Advice Bureau is to issue membership cards to the 5,000 workers who have already joined, and now is the opportunity for all the workers who have not yet joined, to do so immediately.

Membership cards will only be issued on Saturday mornings. This is because the Advice Bureau has so much work during the week, especially dealing with complaints. So each factory committee must appoint one or two of its members to come to the Advice Bureau office in Athlone to collect membership cards. If it is possible bring a list of workers who wants cards with you - this will save time later.