

NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA

Workers in the Building Labourers Federation of Australia have found many new ways of pressing home their claims against their bosses. While we are not suggesting that all these ideas are suitable for South Africa, they are amusing examples of new methods.

In one case, workers on a site used nudity as a weapon, much to the embarrassment of the boss and the authorities. These workers had been using jackhammers in an excavation, getting covered with dust in dry weather and mud in wet. They demanded showers. When they didn't get them, they rigged up a hose on the steps of the city hall and took a shower there. The spectacle of these laughing boisterous workers naked in such honoured surroundings was enough. They got their showers.

During strikes, vigilantes go round to ensure that no work is going on. If after a warning, they returned to find a newly-built wall, for instance, they dealt with it in the most direct way - by breaking it down.

The Union has maintained pressure for 'stopwork meetings' (on full pay) to discuss Union business on the sites. Not strikes, but normal everyday meetings to discuss matters on hand.

This is seen as one step in the direction of making bosses redundant. One group demanded that the bosses give them a list of the things they would like done, but the final decision of what actually got done would be taken by all the workers.

Perhaps one of the most famous projects of the Building Union is the 'green bans'. If a development is objected to by the local people because it will threaten the quality of their lives, the people can appeal to the Union. If, after negotiations between the developers and the local people, the locals are still opposed to the development, a 'green ban' is applied, and no worker will work on the site. At the moment three thousand million dollars worth of work is being held up by the 'green ban', and many parks, churches and historical buildings have been saved.

Ends.