

Hospital workers fight back!

NEHAWU members at Baragwanath Hospital see the arrest of 78 union members last year as vicious union-bashing. Out of all those arrested last year, only 1 worker was found guilty of theft. The rest were innocent.

At the time of the arrest, there were big stories in the newspapers blaming workers for all the problems at Baragwanath in Soweto. Hospital bosses said workers were stealing goods and drugs worth thousands of rands.

Talking to *Cosatu News*, workers said the Security Service Consultants of Baragwanath had "arrested" them. "They searched our homes and living quarters in the middle of the night. Then they took us to their headquarters in Wynberg. They made us sign statements they had written. They took out bags of hospital stuff - some of it still neatly packed - saying we must admit it was found at our homes in the raid."

The case was eventually thrown out of court this year. The magistrate said the main state witness was unreliable. He is Mr D. Condon, the director of Security Service Consultants who the hospital employed to "investigate" theft. The other director is Craig Williamson, the spy who infiltrated the ANC.

The union is considering taking legal action. It is also demanding that the TPA take full responsibility for what happened. "We spoke to the superintendant demanding that he goes to the press to clear our name. He said he would, but we are still waiting."

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NEHAWU members from Natalspruit Hospital, who

Lawyers are costing COSATU and its affiliates millions of rand each year. But there are problems in trying to fight the workers struggle through the bosses courts. Sometimes we rely on clever arguments of lawyers instead of the strength of workers to win against the bosses. COSATU has set up a commission to look into the Industrial Court. It seems no real gains are being made by trade unions using this court. COSATU has also negotiated maximum prices that labour lawyers can charge for union work. These range from R60 an hour for a junior counsel to R200 an hour for a senior junior counsel. On this page *Cosatu News* looks at some struggles where the courts have been used.

recently won reinstatement through the court after an 18 month long struggle, speak :

"We hope that our strike has shown that, although we are not professionals, we are brave workers who are devoted to the struggle. Our only regret is that we won the struggle through the courts. We would have preferred to win through struggle on the basis of our own strength. This would have increased our unity.

We went on strike hoping that we would fight our own struggle on the hospital grounds. But it happened that we did not get support from the community and other workers in NEHAWU. So the court was inevitable. But the courts are part of the system. If we win in court, it is not because the court is in favour of workers. It is because of the arguments presented by workers."

These workers - the shop-steward leadership of the Natalspruit Hospital work

ers - are now in a struggle to prevent the bosses from transferring them to different hospitals in the Witwatersrand region.

Build solidarity with NEHAWU and all public sector workers!



SARMCOL VICTORY

The striking Sarmcol workers won an important victory in the bosses Supreme Court - but their Long March continues.

The Court overturned a decision of the Industrial Court when it refused to order the reinstatement of striking workers. The workers were dismissed 3 days into a legal strike in May 1985.

NUMSA has now demanded negotiations. "The company can no longer hide behind its excuse that the matter is "sub judice" (being dealt with by the court). We once again call on the company and its parent company in Britain to meet around the negotiating table. It has taken four years of suffering to make our point", said NUMSA.

During this time workers started the Sarmcol Co-op to help workers to survive.

Build worker solidarity action!