



ICECREAM WORKERS FREEZE LAY-OFFS

On the 16th of January, management served 130 workers with retrenchment notices informing them that their services terminate on 31st January. This made the workers furious.

An emergency shopsteward meeting was held at the Epping premises. At the meeting it was decided that all the depot workers must march down to Epping immediately and that a general meeting will be held during the lunch hour.

While the general meeting was in process at the Epping premises the depot workers arrived. The bosses locked them out and the Epping workers decided to march to the main gate and demand that they must be allowed in. At the gate a meeting was held with the depot workers on the other side of the gate and the Epping workers on the other side. It was decided that no one will go back to his place of work until:

1. the depot workers are allowed inside;
2. a general meeting is held;
3. and notices are suspended to the original date of 31st March 1987;

The bosses at first played it tough and said they don't speak to workers while they are on strike. An hour or two later, they were forced to speak to us. The whole operation had been brought to a complete halt.

A Dairy Maid worker and Fawu shopsteward writes about their struggle against retrenchments. The story begins after efforts at mediation had failed.

Everybody participated in the work stoppage, members, casuals, as well as non-member. No one was allowed in or out.

The bosses agreed that we can have a general meeting in the parking lot; that all workers can go home immediately after the general meeting after receiving full pay and that a meeting will be held between management and the shopsteward committee of the general meeting.

At the meeting between management and the shopstewards committee management informed us that they only had a mandate to serve the notices and not suspend them. They must first consult with head-office. We demanded an answer by 08h00 the following day which was a Saturday.

At this meeting the bosses told us that they won't suspend

the notices. And the workers informed them that the strike will continue. No trucks went out - no trucks came in. The factory was haunted. The workers remained in front of the gate.

On Monday morning the whole shopsteward committee as well as two organisers was served with court interdicts and we had to sign an undertaking restraining us from intimidation, erecting barricades; slashing of tyres, stopping trucks from entering and leaving, etc.

Luckily for us we had a FAWU B.E.C. and an I.C.S. Western Cape Co-ordinators meeting on the Saturday and Sunday where we informed other workers of our struggle. At this meetings workers from various factories pledged their support in the following way:

- Pressure on their own bosses;
- pressure on Dairy Maid bosses;
- banning of overtime at their factories;
- work stoppages;

• refusal to deliver at Dairy Maid and sympathetic strikes. These pledges materialised in action. The pressure from our comrades was so great that the bosses requested a meeting for the Tuesday informing us that they are prepared to extend the notices until the 28th February but the retrenchment is not negotiable, and that we must call off outside "interference". We stick to our demands that the notices must be suspended to 31st March and that the retrenchments must be negotiated.

That same day police started turning up in vans and cospirs. The committee was always in control of the situation and the workers never panicked. They were always very strong and calm.

On Wednesday management requested another meeting saying they are prepared to extend the date till March but retrenchments is not negotiable. We stick to our demands. On Thursday Dairy Belle Cape Town came out on strike in support and Dairy Maid and Dairy Belle Clayville threatened

to come out on a strike if our demands are not met.

That day the S.B. tried to arrest the Chairman of Dairy Maid shopsteward committee. The workers prevented them by surrounding them and started shaking the casspir. When more police moved in the chairman was moved off to a waiting car with all workers surrounding him protectively. The car sped away at a high speed with the S.B. not having a clue of what happened.

That same day management requested a meeting for the next day. At this meeting the bosses said they had decided to meet the demands of the workers - the notices will be suspended and retrenchments are negotiable.

At Dairy Maid we have learned a lot:

1. When you take action take it collectively to make it effective;
2. Plan and strategise carefully because the bosses do the same;
3. Call in support of other workers and community organisations like U.D.F., religious groups, etc.;
4. We also learnt that we as workers got the power in our hands. The power to bring the bosses to their knees - even the power to prevent the S.B. from arresting a fellow worker.

CHEMICAL WORKERS IN 3 WEEK STRIKE FOR A LIVING WAGE

The settlement came after a series of negotiations that came to a dead-lock at the conciliation board. It was only through a whole day's mediation that a negotiated settlement was reached.

Workers won 31% increase on the minimum wage, to be paid as R80 per month backdated to January and R34 in July.

A giant step has been made in the struggle to equalise wages for women workers in

More than 700 members of CWIU, at 4 Mining and Industrial Rubber plants (MIR), ended a 3 weeks legal strike over wages and improved work conditions. The CWIU had this to say after a settlement was reached

Phalaborwa. Minimum rates for women workers have improved by 54% to be paid as R107 in January and R54 in July. Unpaid maternity leave for 6

months with job security has been won. The struggle for maternity leave and job security has been a long battle as the company in the past three years refused to grant these benefits.

However, determination and willpower finally saw the introduction of a maternity leave policy. This will be the beginning of an era in MIR where the working conditions of women will come under close scrutiny.

Other victories

May Day and June 16th were also won as paid public holidays. An improved long service allowance scheme, a guaranteed annual bonus and a minimum of 4 days unpaid compassionate leave was part of the package won by workers.

The settlement should be seen against a background of improving the wages and working conditions in the industrial rubber sector. It is well known that this sector is

notorious for its low wages and poor and inhuman working conditions. MIR workers have significantly challenged these low wages and appalling working conditions

Living wage

The victory of the MIR workers is a practical step in our campaign for living wage. The gains made on the maternity benefits, are a concrete move in intergrating women workers through their demands in our living wage campaign.