

Half-day May Day

IN a significant step towards the acceptance of May Day as a workers' public holiday, Sarmcol at Howick has agreed to give its workers a half-day off on May 1 each year.

FOSATU and the other independent unions have embarked on a campaign to have May Day recognised as a workers' holiday — as it is in many countries around the world.

For many years, May Day has not been celebrated by South African workers.

Wage settlement

However this year, a mass meeting was organised by the independent unions in Cape Town and in Natal workers wore May Day stickers.

The May Day half-day off was negotiated as part of a wage settlement with Sarmcol.

The wage agreement which pushes the minimum wage up to R329 per month was reached after four months of negotiations.

During this time, the union was forced to declare a dispute, hold a strike ballot, ban overtime and it sent a delegation to the company's annual shareholders' meeting.

MAWU said that the final wage offer which resolved the dispute was 59 percent higher than what had been originally offered by the company.

CHT workers taken back

ROSSLYN components firm, CHT Manufacturing Company, has been ordered to take back 100 workers who it earlier this year fired for refusing to work overtime.

In February, workers at this factory near Pretoria refused to continue working overtime while the company refused to negotiate wages with the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union.

Management then attempted to get workers to sign a docu-

ment agreeing to work overtime of up to 34 hours per shift — a clear breach of current legislation which limits overtime to a maximum of 10 hours per week.

When workers refused to sign, CHT fired the entire workforce.

NAAWU told the industrial court that the dismissals had taken place while the workers were still working and the shop stewards committee was still negotiating the issue.

The court held that the

workers had a clear right to refuse to work overtime and that their refusal did not constitute a strike.

The court said workers were not required to work hours in excess of the normal hours per week as laid down in the industrial council agreement.

NAAWU welcomed the court decision saying it had come at a time when, in the course of the union's recruitment drive in the components industry, it had uncovered more and more fact-

ories which had equally unacceptable and dehumanising wages and working conditions.

'We have warned the competent manufacturers that we will not tolerate such conditions and if necessary we will turn to industrial action and dispute procedures to remedy these,' a union spokesperson said.

'Workers in this sector of industry have for too long been at the mercy of unscrupulous, get-rich-quick profiteers,' he added.

Biscuit council crumbles

THE biscuit industry's industrial council is crumbling.

TUCSA's National Union of Operative Biscuit Makers has blocked the entry of the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union to the council.

However, two major employers, Bakers and Fedbisco, have told the council that they are not prepared to participate in council negotiations without SFAWU, according to union sources.

The union sources also said that the chairman of Bakers had resigned from his position as chairman of the council.

The TUCSA union is now faced with a dilemma — either it lets SFAWU join the council or there is a strong possibility that the council will collapse.

For the past two years, the TUCSA union has been losing ground to SFAWU.

Both Bakers (which is by far the largest company in the biscuit industry) and Fedbisco have agreed to negotiate wages for 1984-5 with SFAWU at plant-level.

Another issue that has brought SFAWU into confrontation with the biscuit union is the principle of majority unionism.

SFAWU argues that where it has majority membership at a factory only it can speak for the workers at that factory.

The biscuit union opposes this saying that it should be able to represent the small pockets of membership it has left in SFAWU dominated factories.

A SFAWU spokesperson said that by blocking SFAWU, the biscuit union hoped to maintain its position as the sole spokesperson for all biscuit workers.

'But to this union's horror the council is crumbling before its very eyes,' he said.

PWAWU prepares for wage negotiations

IN its first negotiations at the Pulp and Paper Industrial Council, the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union will be demanding that the minimum hourly wage be hiked up by nearly R1.

This will bring the industry's present R1,38 per hour minimum wage up to R2,30.

The union is also demanding that May Day — Workers' Day — be a paid public holiday for the industry.

In many countries around the world, May Day, is recognised as a workers' public holiday —

it is set aside for workers to show world-wide solidarity.

PWAWU only recently joined the industrial council and will shortly be participating in the annual negotiations for a new industry-wide agreement covering wages and working conditions.

The union submitted its demands to the council after they were agreed to at a National Executive Committee meeting held on August 18 and 19.

A union spokesperson said the

wage demand 'should not prove too much of a problem for the Mondi Group which already pays its workers R2 an hour at most of its paper mills.'

'However, the other major paper employer, Sappi, at present pays wages only just above the industrial council minimum,' she said.

The union has a majority membership at all six of Mondi's paper mills.

In its proposals, PWAWU has also demanded that the present

46 hour working week be reduced to 40 hours.

A union spokesperson said this would mean that shift workers would continue to work the usual hours but six of these would be paid at overtime rates.

Other important demands are:

- * a holiday bonus of four and a third weeks' pay.
- * A shift allowance of R2 per shift.
- * And a service allowance of an extra 3c per hour for each year of service.

Chris Dlamini renews call for unity

UNITY was the main message of the day at the annual general meeting of the Transvaal branch of the Transport and General Workers Union on Sunday August 25.

FOSATU president, Chris Dlamini, in the key speech of

the day called on workers in all trade unions to unite.

'We must unite to fight the bosses in the factories, and we must unite in the communities,' he said.

'We are facing increases in rents every day and our child-

ren are facing terrible conditions and bad education in the schools,' he added.

Brother Dlamini said the Local Authorities which had been set up by the oppressive government could never serve the interests of workers.



Bashweshwe dancers perform at TGWU's annual general meeting