

The Ciskei's war against workers

THE major independent unions, including FOSATU, have attacked the recent banning of the South African Allied Workers Union by the so-called Ciskeian government.

In a strongly worded statement the unions said this banning was the 'most serious attack' on the trade union movement since the banning of trade union leaders in 1976.

ARRESTED

They added that neither the South African government nor employers could distance themselves from this action by the 'Ciskei government'.

The involvement of the South African government was clearly shown by the actions of the SA Police which arrested union officials and handed them over to the Ciskei, they said.

SAAWU's banning comes in the midst of a boycott of buses partly owned by the 'Ciskeian government'.

The Ciskei authorities have blamed the unions for the boycott and have launched an all out attack on union members.

DETAINED

Over the past few months more than 80 people have been detained by the Ciskei police, including officials of the African Food and Canning Workers Union, the General Workers Union and SAAWU.

The police and Ciskei-backed vigilante groups have been attacking workers with sjamboks, sabres and knobkerries in an attempt to get the workers to use the buses.

KILLED

And on two occasions the Ciskei police have fired on people outside the Fort Jackson railway station killing five and wounding about 50.

Reports have also filtered through that the Mdantsane stadium has been turned into a 'concentration camp' into which

the Ciskei-backed vigilantes have herded innocent people and then assaulted and tortured them.

The independent unions in the statement 'utterly rejected' the Ciskei's statement that the unions were responsible for the bus boycott.

They said the people of Mdantsane were boycotting buses because the bus company was making profits at the expense of workers.

SUPPRESSED

The unions said there could be no talk of reform while worker organisations were suppressed.

At the September meeting of the FOSATU Executive this statement by the independent unions was fully supported.

The Executive said the banning of SAAWU was a clear act of hostility against South African workers.

FOSATU warned Ciskei that it could not win this 'war' against workers.

Court attempt to get workers back

THE Metal and Allied Workers Union has taken two East Rand metal companies to the Industrial Court in a bid to win the re-instatement of dismissed union members.

The Alberton factory, Screenex Wire Weaving Manufacturers has been accused by the union of having unfairly retrenched 12 workers.

MAWU has asked the court to order their re-instatement with back-pay.

The union said Screenex had gone ahead and retrenched these workers at the end of last year even though it had previously promised to renew all migrant labour contracts.

The company had also said it would not retrench any workers before looking at ways of avoiding retrenchment, the union said.

If retrenchment became necessary management promised to give up to two months notice to its workers, it added.

However, with only a day's notice these workers were suddenly told that their employment was at an end after, in some cases, ten years' service, MAWU told the court.

The union also said Screenex had refused to meet with the union to discuss the issue and 'not even' the industrial council could bring the company to the negotiating table.

The Screenex case will continue in December.

Barlow Rand's Kew company has also been taken to court after the company fired 12 workers after the recent stoppage at the factory.

The company has argued before the court that where an employer fired a worker after giving the required notice pay, the Industrial Court has no power to decide whether the sacking was 'unfair'.

MAWU is waiting for the court to give judgement on this point.

If the court agrees with the company's argument, this could take away the court's power to order re-instatement of fired workers.



MAWU members proudly carry the union's banner into the AGM

'Strive to build a strong working class movement'

METAL workers must strive to build a strong working class organisation - Transvaal branch secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers Union, Moses Mayekiso said at the union's annual general meeting recently.

Speaking to over 5 000 workers, Brother Mayekiso said by organising all the big steel producers, MAWU should have a membership of about 100 000 by 1984.

'We must keep on consolidating, strengthening our democratic structures and politicising our members

'We must negotiate on all levels where our members have the most strength.

'We must fight all kinds of exploitation through our strength,' Brother Mayekiso told workers.

He said the union supported the FOSATU stand on UDF and other political organisations.

'We believe that workers as a class should fight their own problems.

'As the enemy is only one - capitalism - and all other things like influx control are merely appendages,' he said.

Brother Mayekiso said the workers must keep up the

fight against the 'evil' of retrenchment.

'Retrenchments have taught workers that the capitalists are only interested in production and profits - not the workers.'

He said in the urban areas retrenched workers were dying of hunger and lost their accommodation because of unemployment.

'And in the rural areas where there is famine, workers are just dumped there with no thought to alternatives,' Brother Mayekiso said.

In resolutions adopted at the MAWU AGM, workers condemned Seifsa for encouraging employers not to negotiate wages outside of the industrial council.

'We believe that it is the right of workers to bargain on working conditions and wages either at the factory or nationally.'

The workers also said that MAWU would not co-operate or work together with sell-out unions.

They condemned attempts by companies to push MAWU on to joint negotiating committees at plant-level.

After the meeting Moses Mayekiso told FOSATU Worker

News that MAWU was rapidly becoming a powerful force in the metal industry.

'It is no longer just a union,' he said, 'It is a movement of workers.'

He said the union was not only

involved in 'bread and butter' issues but was involved in the broader struggle for 'liberation'.

'It is impossible to separate the two in South Africa when dealing with the oppressed voiceless masses,' Brother Mayekiso concluded.



Moses Mayekiso