

Frame pinned down!

FRAME has finally been pinned down.

And early next year a large number of Frametex workers will give evidence in the industrial court in support of the union's recognition case.

Since 1982 the workers have been waiting patiently for this moment.

Their employer, meanwhile, has been running from one court to another in an attempt to stop NUTW's case being heard.

The union's case revolves around a meeting with Frame director, Abe Frame, in October 1982 where he agreed to recognise NUTW at Frametex if it could prove it had majority membership.

NUTW then submitted over 2 000 membership forms to management, most of which they refused to accept.

Soon after this, Frame went ahead and recognised TUCSA's Textile Workers Industrial Union

because, it claimed, the majority of workers in the company's New Germany mills belonged to TWIU.

Frame denies that it had agreed to recognise NUTW at Frametex saying it is company policy to only recognise a union which has the majority in the entire complex.

In court, NUTW will argue that Frame deliberately encouraged the sweetheart TWIU and workers will tell how company officials forced them to resign from the union.

Frame's last attempt to block the industrial court case was made on September 17 in the Supreme Court.

The court dismissed the company's arguments and now, at last, the recognition case will go ahead.

While waiting for Frame to finish its journey through the courts, NUTW has been recruit-

ing workers in other mills in the complex.

And the union now believes it, and not the TWIU, has a majority membership in the New Germany complex.

It would appear that the company now has no reason to refuse to recognise NUTW.

Predictably, this makes little difference to the company and so the union has been forced to declare a dispute on this issue as well.

NUTW is waiting for the Minister of Manpower to appoint a Conciliation Board.

Meanwhile, after another court battle, Frame has been forced to cancel TWIU stop orders for workers at the Pinetex mill who have crossed over to NUTW - the company had initially refused to do this.

The New Year could see the end of one of the toughest, and longest, recognition battles in South African labour history.

American textile union praises Frame workers

THE American Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union singled out the workers at Frame's New Germany mills for special praise during the union's recent convention.

And it has pledged its support for their struggle.

In a report which motivates a resolution on America's Foreign Policy, ACTWU also attacks South Africa's apartheid system.

'The apartheid system through which the minority white government controls and exploits the majority non-white population of the country is one of the most cruel and systematic forms of racial oppression ever devised,' it says.

The report says that an indepen-

endent black trade union movement has emerged in recent years 'despite a continuing governmental policy of arrests, torture, bannings and other persecution of black trade union leaders and those assisting organisation'.

'We commend the textile workers at the Frame company for their courage in pursuing unionisation in the face of great company and government opposition,' it adds.

The report continues to single out the homelands policy as one of the 'worst manifestations' of apartheid because it makes most of South Africa's blacks foreigners in their own land.

Cape factory's sick visits ended by union

MANAGEMENT of a Western Cape textile company recently decided to start visiting sick workers at home.

But this wasn't a sign of management's thoughtful concern for their workers - the workers' well being was far from their minds.

SA Nylon Spinners at Bellville started the house-visits as part of a plan to cut down absenteeism.

The idea behind the visits was to try and persuade workers to return to work early.

And also to collect information on doctors who gave certificates to SANS workers.

The management hoped to catch doctors who they thought were giving workers certificates when they weren't really sick and then to report them to the Medical Council.

One worker affected by SANS house-visits was Hoosain Ismail - he was put off sick for one week because he had bronchitis.

After only three days, he was visited at home and persuaded to return to work.

Only an hour after starting work, Brother Ismail collapsed and had to drive himself home again.

The National Union of Textile Workers, which represents 840 workers at the factory, strongly objected to the house-visit campaign.

And when the company arranged a meeting with local doctors to discuss the absenteeism, the union decided to approach the doctors and give them the workers' point of view.

NUTW told the doctors that the house-visits were an invasion of the privacy of the individual and an abuse of company power.

The union said it believed the SANS campaign was also a statement of no confidence in the local doctors since the company seemed to think that the doctors were giving workers unnecessary certificates.

SANS was interfering in decisions which were the responsibility of the doctors alone, the union said.

At the union's meeting with the doctors several of them spoke out against the company's absenteeism campaign.

The department of Manpower was also invited and department

officials stated that doctors' certificates were legal documents and companies had to recognise them as the basis for paid sick leave.

Eventually, SA Nylon Spinners at a meeting with NUTW agreed to stop their house-visits of sick workers.

Meanwhile, at Transvaal factory, Braitec, doctors' certificates were also the cause of a dispute between workers and management.

At this textile factory, workers went on strike when the company fired a colleague for being absent in spite of the fact that he had brought a doctor's certificate.

Workers argued that if one worker could be sacked even when he had a certificate then anyone could be dismissed.

They returned to work after a six-hour stoppage when Braitec agreed to discuss the dismissal again with NUTW.

Clothing workers free from stranglehold of Garment closed shop

AT last! Workers at James North clothing factory in Pinetown can belong to the union they have chosen.

Prior to the change in South Africa's labour legislation, these clothing workers were barred from TUCSA's Garment Workers Industrial Union because of their race.

However, when the new changes opened the way for black workers to legally join trade unions, the TUCSA union was quick to seize this opportunity to increase its membership.

The clothing industry's closed shop was extended to include black workers and letters were sent out to employers telling them to now deduct union dues for their black employees.

All of a sudden the James North workers found themselves members of GWIU - whether they liked it or not.

And if they resigned from the TUCSA union, the closed shop would see to it that they lost their jobs.

But in spite of this, workers decided to join the National Union of Textile Workers.

In a ballot held at the beginning of this year, 219 James North workers supported NUTW and only 43 voted for GWIU.

Immediately after this the company agreed to sign a recognition agreement with NUTW granting it stop order and other union rights.

James North also agreed to support the union in its application for exemption from the clothing industry's closed shop.

Meanwhile, the GWIU decided to change its constitution to allow it to expel workers who became members of another union.

The James North workers had

remained members of GWIU in order to protect their jobs while they waited for the outcome of NUTW's application for an exemption.

When the clothing industrial council turned down NUTW's application, the union challenged this decision in the industrial court.

In terms of the court's judgement the James North workers are now free to resign from GWIU without being dismissed.

And NUTW is now free to negotiate at plant-level for its members at the Pinetown factory.

NUTW has now applied to the industrial council for exemption from the closed shop for members at several other clothing factories.

Early in December the union should know whether it has to once again challenge GWIU in the industrial court.

Textile workers pack hall



A HALL usually filled with Natal University students was jam packed with workers on September 16. They were attending the Annual General Meeting of the National Union of Textile Workers. Apart from reports on the struggles waged by the union during the year, workers were entertained by numerous workers choirs and a play was put on by Burhose workers. In resolutions taken at the meeting, NUTW said it would continue to challenge the 'stranglehold' that TUCSA unions had over the lives of its members through their 'exclusive control' of industrial councils. Workers also discussed the 'persistent anti-union stand' taken by Frame and resolved to continue by lawful means to pressure for union recognition at Frame mills where the union held a majority. At the meeting, workers also slammed the government's decentralisation policy which was 'aimed at relocating factories in areas where wages and working conditions can be depressed to abominable levels'. The NUTW attacked the assistance given to employers which encouraged them to close factories in the urban areas and move them to the homelands. The union said it would continue to press at all levels for 'fair wages and conditions for all members irrespective of the area where such factories are situated'.

TUCSA union deserted

WORKERS from another leather factory have deserted a TUCSA union and joined the National Union of Textile Workers.

The workers from Honey and Sons Tannery at Nigel follow close on the heels of leather workers from Jaguar Shoes at Pietermaritzburg who joined NUTW earlier this year.

NUTW branch secretary, Bangi Solo said the union had held a meeting with the Nigel workers in June which was attended by just over 80 percent of the tannery's workforce.

'When we looked at the workers' pay slips we found they had been paying dues to the Transvaal Leather Industrial Union,' he said.

'But workers said they had been completely unaware that they were members of a union and said that it had held no activities at their factory,' he added.

Brother Solo said the workers had said that 'anyway they did not want a union imposed on them, they want one that they have chosen'.

'In the meeting, workers complained that their foremen abused them calling them kaffirs and baboons and that there were a lot of dismissals for minor things like smoking in the toilets,' he said.

Brother Solo said that by July the union had signed up 90 percent of the workers and decided it was time to introduce themselves to the company.

'We spoke to the Group Personnel Manager who said he was not opposed to the union and asked for proof of membership,' he said.

Shortly after this, Brother Solo said, the TUCSA union went to the factory and tried to address workers.

'In the meeting which was held in the canteen, the workers asked the union official where he had been all this time.'

'When he failed to answer their questions satisfactorily, the workers told him to leave and not to come back and they then left the canteen,' he said.

Brother Solo said workers were still 'pushing' management to deal with the union.

'But they are reaching a stage of frustration and anything could happen,' he added.