

NO SMILES AT COKE

Sarmcol workers' day of celebration

THERE aren't any smiling faces down at the Coke factory in Vereeniging in spite of the Coca-Cola advert 'Have a Coke and a smile'.

The workers there are locked in a deadlock with their management over wages.

And already it has led to two strikes at this cooldrink factory.

Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union general secretary, Maggie Magubane said the union had recently entered the first wage negotiations to be held at this factory.

In a bid to raise the 'appalling' wages paid to workers the union had demanded that the weekly minimum be raised to R96, she said.

'The R68 a week wages paid at this factory are lower than any other factory we are organising in the Transvaal,' she added.

However, management have refused to go beyond R77 a week.

As a result of this 'intransigence' workers have stopped work twice for two days in protest at management's attitude, Sister Magubane said.

She said the company had even invited a group of Industrial Relations people from Cape Town to interview workers individually to find out their grievances.

But workers soon saw this as an attempt to divide them and have refused to talk to these people, she added.

The union has now taken steps to declare a dispute with the company and has called for the forming of a Conciliation Board.

Sister Magubane said if this failed to solve the deadlock, it could lead to workers going out on a legal strike.

She said the union had also demanded details of the new pension scheme from the company.

'We have asked for a list of the trustees of the fund and the minutes of previous meetings, but so far management have not responded to this request,' she said.

'According to recent reports from workers, it appears that since the union requested this information management has been trying to get workers to resign from the fund,' Sister Magubane said.

TGWU joins International Federation

THE Transport and General Workers Union recently affiliated to the four million strong International Transport Workers' Federation.

The ITF was founded in 1896 in London and at present has 387 unions from all over the world affiliated to it.

The International Federation is no stranger to South Africa.

During last year's strike by docker members of the General Workers Union in Port Elizabeth the ITF vehemently attacked the South African Transport Services for not recognising a representative union.

It will undoubtedly lend the same support to the TGWU in its struggles against hard line South African management.

IT was a day for celebration when more than 200 people gathered at the Mpophomeni Community hall to see the presentation of R300 to each of the 13 retrenched Sarmcol workers.

Of course, the celebration was not held because 13 workers were retrenched. But rather because their retrenchment marked the road to victory in a long, long struggle for union recognition at this Howick factory.

For ten years the Metal and Allied Workers Union has been struggling against tremendous odds to win recognition at Sarmcol.

In the middle of a renewed campaign last year these 13 workers were retrenched.

With the aid of strong statements from the retrenched workers, MAWU proceeded to take the company to the Industrial Court for 'unfair labour practices'.

But Sarmcol decided to settle out of court and has granted the union stop order facilities and has agreed to negotiate a full recognition agreement with MAWU.

At the presentation, the moment of truth came when the union handed over the cheques to the 13 workers.

Some people could not believe their eyes. Most Sarmcol workers were not 100 percent sure whether MAWU would ever



Some of the people who came to the Sarmcol meeting at which the Mayor of Mpophomeni also wished the 13 retrenched workers well and congratulated the Sarmcol workers on their victory.

get into the factory, let alone make such a generous offer to retrenched workers.

MAWU local organiser, John Makhatini told the workers that it was by no 'miracle' that the union had got inside the factory.

'It was because of the power of the workers,' he said.

He added that workers had made it clear that they wanted the union instead of a liaison committee which was nothing more than the company's 'mouthpiece'.

But, he said, this was just the beginning of the struggle, workers should not just sit back and

relax.

Later, the branch secretary of MAWU, Geoff Schreiner explained to workers that Sarmcol was the key factory in Howick.

'If you can control Sarmcol,' he said, 'then you will be able to stand as a strong force in the area.'

Workers thrown into 'poverty dustbin'



WADEVILLE factory, Litemaster, has callously thrown over 80 of its workers into the 'poverty dustbin'.

This was said by the Metal and Allied Workers Union as it stepped up its campaign to have the these workers re-instated.

The 86 workers were not taken back by the company after a strike at the beginning of July.

The workers, who have been meeting everyday in FOSATU's Katlehong office, have appealed to 'brothers in Katlehong and Thokoza not to take our jobs, they must unite with us'.

And the union is investigating legal avenues in a bid to get the workers back at work.

The problem started back in May when the company retrenched 40 workers without listen-

ing to workers' proposal that jobs be shared.

The retrenched workers all signed grievance forms stating that 'I can't accept that I am retrenched. I'm unfairly dismissed and want to be re-instated.'

However management refused to discuss their grievances and have insisted that retrenchment was a management prerogative.

This led to a strike on July 12 by the entire workforce.

The following day the company selectively rehired 135 workers, but not the 86, and this included all the shop stewards except one.

MAWU has slammed Litemaster for coming to South Africa 'just for profits'.

'When times are bad the shareholders are not prepared to help their workers,' the union said.

R10 000 paid to 15 steel workers

TEN thousand Rand has been paid to 15 Geo Stott workers after an out of court settlement between the company and the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

And the company has agreed to take back all of these workers who were retrenched in December last year.

Transvaal branch secretary, Moses Mayekiso said that only 12 workers were back at work at this stage and the union was waiting for the others to return from the rural areas.

In the settlement, the company also agreed to recognise MAWU if more than 50 percent of the workers voted 'Yes' in a secret ballot.

Brother Mayekiso said that in a landslide victory for MAWU 90 percent of the workers voted in favour of being represented by the union.

MAWU now has a majority membership among Iron and Steel producers which consist mainly of Geo Stott, Scaw Metals and Dunsward, Iron and Steel.