

NUM AND CHAMBER OF MINES VISIT GERMANY



NUM and COM delegation to Germany seen with Dr Werner Tegtmeier, Permanent Under Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Labour in the middle.

A joint NUM and Chamber of Mines (COM) delegation recently visited Germany to learn how the German coal mining industry manages the process of downscaling. The historic visit followed an invitation of the two parties by the German Union of Mineworkers (IGBE) and the mining company (Ruhrkohle AG). The four day programme involved intensive discussions with unionists, employers, researchers and government officials. An underground visit was undertaken at Satellite Mine Haltern colliery to gain first hand experience about conditions of work and technological developments involved. In the coal district of Ruhr the delegation also visited the research, development

and education center of the German hard coal industry called Deutsche-Montan Technology (DMT) to learn about safety and education. Fruitful discussions were held in Bonn with Dr Werner Tegtmeier, Permanent Under Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Labour. Similar discussions were held in Düsseldorf with the Minister of Economics and Technology of North Rhine Westfalia, Mr Gunther Einert. From Germany the COM/NUM delegation proceeded to Belgium where the Presidents of the two organisations addressed the European Parliament in Brussels. The delegation was led by NUM President, James Motlatsi and COM President, Bobby Godsell.

PRESIDENTS OF NUM AND COM GIVE THEIR IMPRESSIONS ABOUT THE TRIP TO GERMANY.

Recently a joint delegation representing NUM and the Chamber of Mines travelled to Germany and Brussels.

The delegation spent three days in the Ruhr area learning how the German Coal Mining Industry has coped with a dramatic down scaling. In 1957 this industry produced 150 million tons of coal annually from 153 mines employing some 607 000 people. Today it produces 64 million tons of steam coal and metallurgical coal from 26 employing 125 000 people.

In 1968 most of the small independent mines were combined into a new company, Ruhr Kohle. This, we were told, has facilitated both down scaling and the enhancement of the productivity of the mines which have remained in operation.

We met both with the company management and the leadership of the miners union, the IGBE. From them we learned of the pervasive pattern of participation and shared decision making at enterprise, company and industry level.

We were impressed by the extensive training and education efforts of both the company and the union, as well as the national 'dual system' of technical education, in which a substantial proportion of young people spend two days a week in school learning practical skills, and three days a week gaining practical competencies in the workplace.

The future of European coal is uncertain. In Germany government, at both federal and state level, together with employers and the union, as well as the electricity suppliers, have agreed on a plan to guide the development of the steam and metallurgical coal mining industry to the year 2005. The plan provides for a further reduction in coal production and employment. It however seeks to achieve this in an incremental and systematic way.

The success of the German coal mines is a consequence of a deliberate political policy to preserve a domestic coal industry as a base for secure industry. The price tag

for this policy last year was DM11 billion as a state subsidy.

National interests superseded all narrow sectorial interests for the preservation of an important industry. The German example of labour/management cooperation in the success of the coal industry is outstanding. The organisations remain distinctive. They continue to pursue their own divergent interests. Yet they have learnt to build on the areas of agreement in the interests of the industry they share for the benefit of the entire German nation.

There was much in what we saw that was deeply impressive. Though we did not agree on everything the experience gained was invaluable for finding our own solutions to the current crisis facing gold mining industry. However we are mindful that no country's institutions and practices are simply transferable.

South Africans will have to find their own path. We will have to design institutions and practices that suit our needs and are appropriate to our history. Yet we can be challenged by the German experience of cooperation in the midst of continued difference and conflicting agendas. Without economic growth political transformation is unlikely to bring the quality of life improvements South Africans rightly expect. Experience in Germany shows that employers, unions and the state can cooperate in many areas, and in so doing to serve their members and the community at large effectively.

Of course we need our politicians to complete the transition to democracy. Not only will this normalize social, political and economic relations inside our borders, but it will also allow us to take up our full role in our region, on our continent, and indeed in the world. Our economy can ill afford any delay.

In the meantime employer and union leaders can lay the foundation for sustainable growth and effective social development.



NUM President, James Motlatsi and Bobby Godsell, President of COM are welcomed by the Minister of Economics and technology of North Rhine West Falia, Gunther Einert (in the middle)

Freegold, Vaal Reefs, Western Deep Levels and Elandsrand has reached agreement with the National Union of Mineworkers, the Council of Mining Unions and the Mine Surface Officials Association of South Africa on the terms of a profit sharing bonus scheme.

Negotiation of the scheme formed part of the wage settlement reached between AAC's Gold and Uranium Division and the three employee organisations at industry wage negotiations.

In terms of the scheme, each company will make available 5 per cent of profit for distribution to employees, up to a trigger profit level base on the average available profit of the previous four quarters ending June 1992.

The trigger profit level is R69,2 million for Freegold, R51,7 million for Vaal Reefs, R21,4 million for Western Deep Levels and R10,9 million for Elandsrand. From the trigger profit levels, 20 per cent of the defined profit will be made available for distribution to employees, up to a maximum of 25 per cent of basic earnings.

In terms of the agreement profit is defined as gold mining revenue, plus uranium profit where applicable, less gold mine working costs, less interest paid, less royalties paid, less planned capital expenditure.

As the profit is based on published results, calculation and payment, in a lump sum, will be quarterly in arrears. The first payment, for the July-September quarter, will be made during October.

Agreement has also been reached on joint monitoring of the scheme by management and the respective employee organisations.

Exploitation of workers knows no gender.

