

Labour Trends: 9 September to 3 November

The last quarter of 1989 has been marked by large scale strikes, disputes, stayaways, a consumer boycott and overtime bans. Employer actions included lockouts, dismissals, and interdicts.

In the 8-week period under review, Sars monitored 52 strikes involving over 71 500 workers. Major unions involved in these strikes were Numsa, Fawu, CWIU and Ccawusa. Not included in this figure are the 20 000 Sarhwi railway workers who went out on strike in the first week of November. Of the original 20 000 workers, 6 000 were dismissed on 15 November.

Wages and working conditions were the major strike issues of the period though disciplinary action and worker dismissals also featured. A number of the 52 strikes were legal with unions following generally agreed procedures. However illegal strikes still dominated the period, reflecting a general trend this year.

Strikes over this period have tended to be longer than usual - ranging from between one and three weeks. Examples are Premier Food Industries 19 days; Stocks and Stocks 21 days; Shell 28 days; Transvaal Metal Box 18 days; Black Mountain Mine 15 days and Sasol Mines 13 days.

Currently in the spotlight, the South African Breweries strike entered its fourth week with no sign of a settlement being reached. (See strike table)

After a fairly quiet period, mineworkers have again been on strike at De Beers, Impala Platinum Holdings and Messina Copper Mine. Railway workers too have made a comeback in the current Sarhwi strike where worker action seems to be similar to that of the 1987 strike. Once again trains have been burned and

damaged and there have been clashes between police and strikers.

In keeping with recent trends, bosses confidently used lockouts and interdicts against striking workers. Over 7 600 workers were locked out in eight cases. The number of indicted workers, which is much higher, is difficult to monitor as the weapon is used frequently in many strikes. Police intervention in industrial action has also continued, particularly in enforcing lockouts and interdicts. Workers accused Barlow Rand bosses in Kew of hobnobbing with the police after about 100 policemen baton-charged workers who attempted a sleep-in at the factory.

Increasing numbers of workers and shop stewards have been arrested and charged with intimidation during strikes. As a result unions have had to pay out large sums in bail money. Cosatu and Nactu have stressed the necessity for discipline during strikes, but bosses are quick to employ scabs, provoking confrontations between them and strikers. Strike-related violence continues - particularly in the present SAB strike and six Afcol workers go to court on murder and assault charges.

The last quarter of this year was also marked by continued action around the Labour Relations Act campaign, and the question of trade union unity.

It is almost two years since Cosatu, Nactu and the independent unions launched their anti-LRA campaign where worker action has been powerful, but sporadic. Recent talks with the employer federation, Saccola, have been encouraging with Saccola moving on a number of clauses outlined by the unions.

After more than two years of bitter fighting between the two rival Ccawusa factions, and Harwu's battle with

one of these factions this year, the three groupings have come together to form the South African Commercial and Catering Workers Union (Saccawu), which was launched on 12 November with a membership of 90 000. Forming the new union out of a merger between the two Ccawusa's and Harwu has meant that firm compromises have been demanded from all parties who recognise that the aim of the union must be to unite and organise workers in the commercial and catering sectors. Political clashes which marked most of the fighting previously will have to take a back seat.

Cosatu's aim of achieving one union per industry continues with the incorporation of smaller unions into Cosatu's affiliates. Recent unity talks between Potwa, Saptea and Peasa have paved the way for a merger in the near future. In another development, the Durban Integrated Municipal Employees Association, with 5 600 Indian members, indicated two months ago that it was considering the possibility of a merger with Cosatu's Transport and General Workers Union. Both these moves are important breakthroughs for Cosatu: the Potwa merger will bring a number of coloured workers into the federation and the TGWU/Dime talks may bring in a large number of Indian workers.

The birth of Sactwu - from a merger between Actwusa and Gawu - has achieved one union for the industry. This giant industrial union now has a membership of 185 000, and almost 100% unionisation.

With the annual shut-down of many factories in sight, industrial action will probably decrease. Wage settlements with major retail stores have already been signed - ruling out large-scale wage strikes in this sector. Strikes over retrenchments, such as the one at El-lerines, could however, run on into December.

Strikes and Disputes

Strikes and Disputes: TRANSVAAL

Company	Union	Workers	Date	Events
Acro Engineering Vanderbijlpark	Numsa	177	03.11.89	Management dismissed 177 workers and employed scabs to replace employees on strike over an alleged unfair dismissal. The union was planning a response.
Amalgamated Beverage Industries	Fawu	1 000	28.09-02.10.89	More than a 1 000 Coke employees at three plants went on strike. They demanded firstly, that management recognise the overtime ban called by Cosatu and Nactu and secondly, that management cancel disciplinary hearings against union members. The strike was sparked off by an ABI management decision to discipline drivers who allegedly were not working in accordance with their terms of employment. The workers' demands were not met, and they returned to work four days later.

Autoflug Chamdor	Numsa	300	Sept 89	Numsa members went on strike, claiming Autoflug management used its disciplinary procedures inconsistently. The action related to the disciplinary clause which states that a worker found drunk during working hours will be dismissed. Workers demanded that management use this procedure against a non-union member found drunk on duty. They argued that on previous occasions, Numsa members had been disciplined in this way. After two days management suspended the worker concerned and the strike ended.
Barlow Rand Kew	Numsa	500	28.09.89	A potentially major showdown between Cosatu affiliates and Barlow management was sparked by the dismissal of 500 Numsa members at Barlow Appliances in Kew. The workers were dismissed after a sit-in to back demands for desegregated facilities and for the reinstatement of two workers fired for allegedly assaulting a personnel manager. Shortly after the sit-in, management gave workers a five minute ultimatum: return to work or be fired. Later the supreme court granted Barlow's an interdict ordering workers to leave company premises. Numsa said 100 policemen baton-charged workers who attempted to sleep-in at the factory. Recently, Cosatu affiliates in the mining, metal, textiles, food, paper and construction sectors have clashed with Barlow management at Romatex, Metal Box, Rand Mines and Nampak. Another development in the battle between Barlows and the unions was when the SA Printing and Allied Industries Federation - in which Nampak has a major influence - decided to withdraw from the sector's Industrial Council. This happened immediately after Ppawu applied for membership. And not long ago, Metal Box dismissed its entire East London workforce after a dispute. A recent Cosatu CEC singled out Barlow Rand as one of the country's most sophisticated union-bashers, and the federation planned a campaign to defend its affiliates.
Blackchain Centre Diepkloof	Fedcrow	100	26.09.89	After 100 workers allegedly refused to meet a deadline for submitting renewed job applications, they were locked out by Blackchain Centre management. Fedcrow and management began negotiations to resolve the dispute.
BP SA Transvaal and Cape	CWIU	350	08-13.09.89	CWIU members at BP plants in the Transvaal and the Cape went on strike after a conciliation board hearing failed to break a wage deadlock. After five days, settlement was reached on increases of 15% or R160 a month, whichever was higher. Provision was also made for maternity, paternity and compassionate leave for employees.
Cargo Carriers	TGWU	1 257	04.10-07.11.89	The giant transport company was brought to a virtual standstill when workers staged a national strike at 24 depots. The illegal strike was in sympathy with 280 workers from the Vanderbijlpark branch who were dismissed for 'illegal striking' when they ignored a return to work ultimatum. The dispute was settled at mediation. All workers were reinstated - except for three Vanderbijlpark shop-stewards.
Ellerines	Ccawusa	6 000	27.10.89	Workers threatened a strike at Ellerines after Ccawusa declared a dispute with the company over retrenchments. According to the union, the company intended to retrench workers but had not informed the union of the number involved.
Fedics	Ccawusa	1 500	14.08.89	A deadlock in wage negotiations between Fedics and Ccawusa resulted in a strike by about 1 500 workers at a several Fedics outlets in Johannesburg. Ccawusa demanded a minimum wage of R850 a month against management's offer of R600. The union also demanded centralised bargaining for all Fedics subsidiaries. Management refused this on the grounds that the group's operations were too complex to allow such a structure. Ccawusa claimed management was trying to make things difficult by insisting on individual plant-level bargaining. In some cases, for example Fedics Food Services, the union has to negotiate separately with over 500 outlets.
Fidelity Guards Transvaal	TGWU	1 600	25.09.89	Fidelity Guards workers at four branches in Transvaal went on a one-day wild-cat strike demanding the dismissal of a supervisor for allegedly taking on jobs for money. Management and the union were discussing the issue.
Ga-Rankuwa Hospital		270	25.09.89	Hospital authorities dismissed 200 of the 270 striking student nurses after they failed to heed a management ultimatum to return to work. The nurses were protesting against poor food at their hostel.
GEC Machines Benoni	Numsa	500	30.10.89	Barlow subsidiary, GEC Machines, locked out 500 workers who were striking for higher wages and a centralised bargaining forum. Management offered workers a 20% wage increase while Numsa demanded 30%.
Gold Reef City Crown Mines	Ccawusa	93	October 89	A wage deadlock between Ccawusa and Gold Reef City management sparked off a strike by 93 workers at the entertainment centre. The union demanded an across-the-board wage increase of R115, and a minimum monthly wage of R440. Management offered a R70 across-the-board increase and a R290-a-month minimum.
Jacaranda Transport Company (OFS)	TGWU	500	02.10.89	The entire Jacaranda workforce was dismissed during a strike over a disciplinary issue and over suspicion of corruption in the company's pension scheme. Mediation failed to resolve the dispute and the union was discussing other strategies.
Lebowa Transport (Pty) Ltd Seshogo	Tawu	500	18-24.10.89	Commuters in Pietersburg and Tzaneen were stranded following a one-week strike by workers at the Lebowa Transport Company. Workers claimed management unfairly suspended two workers and dismissed four others. They had asked the dispatch manager not to send buses to a particular village until a colleague who was killed there was buried. After negotiations with the union, management cancelled the suspension and reinstated the dismissed workers.
Lowveld Buses Ellisrus	Tawu	80	Sept 89	Workers downed tools and demanded union recognition. They resumed work five hours later, when management agreed to negotiate with Tawu. A recognition agreement between Tawu and the company was subsequently signed.

Main Paper Johannesburg	Ccawusa		Sept 89	Ccawusa members at Main Paper plants in Johannesburg and Pretoria went on strike following a deadlock in wage negotiations. The union demanded a minimum wage of R180 a week, while management offered R130. The union said police stopped a worker demonstration at the Johannesburg plant.
Murray and Roberts Foundries	Numsa	250	21.09.89	A temporary Rand Supreme Court order forced 250 dismissed strikers at Murray and Roberts Foundries to vacate company premises. The workers were dismissed after striking illegally after a shop steward was dismissed.
Perskor Pietersburg	Mwasa	20	17.10.89	Mwasa members at Perskor went on a seven-hour work stoppage, affecting distribution of the <i>Citizen</i> and <i>Beeld</i> newspapers. Workers were protesting against the alleged assault of a worker by the company's regional manager. Talks between Mwasa and Perskor management resolved the dispute.
Premier Food Industries	Fawu	5 700	05-18.10.89	A two-week wage strike at Premier's edible oils, milling and animal feeds division ended after workers accepted management's revised wage offer. Fawu demanded a minimum increase of R33 a week. Premier offered different increases in the three divisions which ranged from R23 to R28 a week. The two parties finally settled on an average across-the-board increase of R30 or 16% on the minimum weekly wage of R184. Under the agreement, Epol workers would get a R27,50 or 15% increase on the weekly minimum of R182 and an additional 50c from January. Lower grade Epic Oils workers would get a R27,50 increase and higher grade workers a 15% increase with an additional 50c from January.
Rand Water Board	OVGWU	400	21.09.89	About 400 Rand Water Board employees were dismissed after they failed to meet management's ultimatum to halt their work stoppage and return to work. The workers were protesting against the arrest of a union member at the board's Suikerbos plant. They also demanded the dismissal of a white manager who was the cause of various worker grievances. The dispute was pending arbitration.
Ransauer Boland	TGWU	55	10-11.10.89	Management at this goods transport company locked out 26 workers when they went on strike demanding union recognition. Other workers at the company joined the strike after the lockout. Workers returned to work after management agreed to negotiate recognition with TGWU.
Redelinghuys Transport	TGWU	50	11-16.10.89	Management told workers they would not be paid for the 10 October public holiday, so they went on strike. The strikers were dismissed, but were reinstated a few days later, and management agreed to discuss the issue with worker representatives.
SAB	Fawu	6 000	11.10.89-	South Africa faced a beer drought as a strike by about 6 000 workers at South African Breweries entered its fifth week with no prospect of a settlement in sight. Supporters of the strikers have instituted a national beer boycott. The strike at seven breweries and transport depots started after two conciliation board hearings failed to resolve a wage dispute between Fawu and the company. SAB's final offer was a 16% wage increase: this meant R5,45 an hour and a monthly minimum wage of R1 063. Fawu demanded a R6,50 minimum, which is a 38% increase on the current hourly rate of R4,50. The union also made other demands for paternity leave and various bonuses. Management said this raised Fawu's demand to what amounted to a 150% increase. SAB obtained court interdicts evicting workers from plants in the Transvaal, Free State, Northern and Western Cape. The strike has been linked to sporadic incidents of violence: scabs have had their car tyres slashed; two workers were killed; a casual worker was reported stabbed; a SAB supervisor's house in Seshego was petrol bombed; trucks in Soweto were stoned. Fawu emphatically denied any involvement in these incidents, saying the union does not encourage acts of violence. Meanwhile, the National Taverners Association, which controls hundreds of township shebeens and is a major SAB client, pledged support for the strikers and held talks with Fawu. Ukhamba Liquor Association - the umbrella body for 1 500 black Southern African bottle store owners - and other liquor associations also held talks with Fawu. The strike continued amidst escalating incidents of violence.
Sasol Secunda	CWIU	1 700	04-13.09.89	A 10-day legal wage strike by workers at four Sasol plants in Secunda ended after CWIU accepted management's revised wage offer. When the parties deadlocked, the union was demanding an across-the-board increase of R150, and management had refused to budge from its offer of R120 for the bottom grade, R110 for the middle grades and 13% for the higher grades. Settlement was reached when management improved the offer for the middle grades by R10.
South African Transport Services	Sarhwu	17 000	07.11.89-	Transvaal and Natal railway workers went on strike in protest against plans to privatise SATS. They also demanded that the minimum starting wage be increased from R600 to R1 500 a month and that SATS recognise Sarhwu. Incidents of violence, and the burning and damaging of trains have been linked to the strike.
Steel Engineering Company Roodepoort	Numsa	700	11-15.09.89	Over 700 Numsa members went on strike at Steel Engineering after management refused to negotiate over the union's proposal on retrenchments. At least 300 workers faced retrenchment in the planned rationalisation and restructuring programme. After workers marched on the company's Sandton head office, management agreed to re-open negotiations.

Vetsak	Numsa	200	October 89	The Industrial Court ruled that 200 Vetsak workers, dismissed two days after last year's metal strike, were not entitled to any relief. Numsa criticised the judgement, and was considering an appeal against the decision.
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Strikes and Disputes: CAPE

Company	Union	Workers	Date	Events
Atlantis Diesel Engines Cape Town	Numsa	850	21.09.89	Atlantis Diesel Engines locked out 850 workers on a wage strike. Two weeks later workers accepted management's final wage offer and returned to work.
Corobrick Stellenbosch	Cawu	300	Sept 89	Corobrick and Cawu were locked in dispute over retrenchments. The company's Stellenbosch plant was closing, costing about 620 full-time and casual workers their jobs.
Da Gama Textiles East London	Actwusa	1 200	October 89	More than 1 200 Actwusa members at Da Gama's East London branch voted for a strike when the company refused to recognise their union. Management disputed the validity of the ballot, claiming it unfair as it had not been a secret ballot. The struggle for recognition at three Eastern Cape Da Gama factories goes back many years. Management tactics to block the recognition process have included the excuse that one of the factories is in the Ciskei and therefore does not fall under South African labour law. Bosses have also demanded proof of representation at the other factories. The location of the factory has been hotly disputed, as there are no clearly demarcated borders in the region. Actwusa said the company refused to give workers balloting facilities and ballots had to be conducted outside factory gates.
First National Bank Cape Town	Sasbo		Sept 89	Sasbo declared a dispute with First National Bank, following disciplinary action taken against four employees who started a petition seeking support for a 20% pay increase. The society accused management of being 'heavy handed' as its members' actions were not against industrial relations legislation.
Goodyear Uitenhage	Numsa	2 600	14.09.89	About 2 600 Goodyear employees were to receive cash of between R4 500 to R5 000 each. The company also agreed to write-off employee housing loans worth about R3 000 to R5 000 over five years. This was part of an agreement reached between Numsa and Goodyear after an 11-week strike over disinvestment: Goodyear, an American company, pulled out of the country, selling off its local interests to Consol.
Harvestime Port Elizabeth	Fawu		04-09.09.89	Harvestime, a frozen vegetable processing factory, was hit by a strike after management introduced a two-shift system. This change was due to a reduced intake of products. Workers returned to work while management and union officials discussed the changes to production schedules.
Industrial Council for the Cotton Industry	Sactwu	4 000	October 89	Cotton bosses declared a dispute with Sactwu involving 4 000 workers at over 12 factories in the Cape. This action followed a deadlock in annual wage negotiations. For the first time in the industry, bosses declared a dispute against a union. Sactwu initially demanded an across-the-board increase of R40 on the current minimum of R150 a week (last year the union demanded a R50 increase). At the time of deadlock Sactwu had lowered their demand to R33. Employers offered 65c an hour, which amounted to R29,20 a week.
National Panasonic Parrow	EAWTU	190	August 89	The wage strike at this Japanese company entered its 12th week with no signs of agreement between the parties. The union planned to meet Japanese consular officials to seek support.
Shell Port Elizabeth	CWIU	70	29.09- 30.10.89	A month-long strike by Shell workers meant several Eastern Cape Shell depots ran dry. The strike ended when management compromised on a disciplinary issue. The strike was sparked off after management issued a final warning to a senior shop-steward for allegedly abusing the company's sick leave scheme to attend a union meeting. Nine days into the strike management obtained an urgent interdict ordering workers to stop interfering with the running of the company and ordering sleep-in strikers to vacate company premises. Workers returned to work after management withdrew the court interdict, and agreed to reduce the validity period of the warning from 12 to six months, effective from 8th June.
Uitenhage Provincial Hospital	Nehawu	250	06.10.89 & 28.10.89	Domestic workers and general assistants at the provincial hospital in Uitenhage stopped work in protest against alleged repression and discrimination. The workers also demanded a living wage. After a few hours the strike was suspended when management agreed to negotiate with the workers committee. However, workers stopped work again three weeks later, on 28 October.
Volkswagen Uitenhage	Numsa	5 000	22-28.09.89	Volkswagen's Uitenhage plant shut down for almost a week after the entire workforce went on strike over disciplinary action taken against a shop-steward for alleged misconduct. Numsa and Volkswagen management eventually reached agreement on the issue. Management agreed to lift the supreme court interdict obtained against the union and its members.

Strikes and Disputes: NATAL

Company	Union	Workers	Date	Events
Game Discount World Durban	Ccawusa	180	12.10.89	Game Discount World in Durban locked out 180 workers who had been dismissed while striking after a conciliation board failed to resolve their wage dispute. Management's final offer was a R125 monthly increase. Workers demanded an across-the-board monthly increase of R160 and a minimum wage of R680 a month. Other issues in dispute were the annual bonus and staff discounts.
Mistry's Supermarket Durban	Ccawusa		28.10.89	The Durban Supreme Court ordered striking Ccawusa members to refrain from assaulting and intimidating other employees, customers and suppliers at four Mistry Supermarkets. The workers were on an illegal strike against the employment of part-time and casual workers.
Stocks and Stocks	Bawu	600	Sept-Oct 89	A three-week strike, by more than 600 workers at Stocks and Stocks in Natal, ended after the company and Bawu signed a recognition agreement. They settled on an hourly increase of 50c across-the-board. Workers had stopped work after talks over union recognition and wage increases reached deadlock.

Strikes and Disputes: MINES

Company	Union	Workers	Date	Events
Black Mountain Mine Namaqualand	NUM	1 000	05-20.09.89	Over 1 000 workers at Black Mountain Mine, jointly owned by Gold Fields SA and Phelps Dodge, went on a legal strike. They demanded a 25% increase, raising the minimum monthly wage to R296 a month. Management offered a R273 minimum wage - which was in line with Goldfields' policy of a 13,5% across-the-board increase. After a two-week strike workers were forced to accept the final offer when it became clear that management was not prepared to budge and that they were likely to be dismissed. According to NUM the company's current minimum wage of R237 is the lowest in the industry, despite a massive increase in the mine's turnover last year. NUM alleged that during the strike, its members were intimidated by mine security who prevented workers from going to buy food in town. Workers were told to go to Springbok, a town about 110 km away from the mine. The union also said workers rations were cut during the strike, and they were fed soup and porridge. Goldfields was investigating the allegations.
Consolidated Murchison	Numsa	1 400	October 89	Workers went on a legal strike after failing to reach agreement over wages in annual wage negotiations.
De Beers	NUM	8 000	15-24.10.89	About 8 000 miners at five De Beers diamond mines, and its geology division, went on strike for six days to support their demand for wage increases ranging from 19% to 38%. Management offered only between 16% and 17%. The strike was two-phased - workers suspended the strike after three days pending mediation proceedings, and downed tools for a further three days after mediation failed to resolve the dispute. Settlement was reached on an increase of between 15% and 16,5%, backdated to 1 May. De Beers also improved its offer by agreeing to an extra two months back pay to employees at its Namaqualand and Premier mines where the normal incremental date was 1 July. The company also granted 16 June as a paid holiday.
Impala Platinum Holdings	NUM	350	04-07.09.89	A strike, to protest the white elections, by 350 Impala workers ended after three days. Impala, the world's second biggest platinum producer, said the company suffered no production losses during the strike.
Sasol Secunda	CWIU	8 000	04-16.10.89	A 13-day strike by 8 000 mineworkers at Sasol collieries in Secunda ended after Sasol and CWIU reached agreement. Sasol agreed to offer workers a food allowance of R40 from 1 January next year and an additional R20 payment on 1 January 1991. Management also agreed to drop the cost of re-issuing company badges from R60 to R20. This amount is refundable if the lost badge is found.

Repression Monitor - September/October 1989

September - CWIU reported heavy SAP presence at Sasol throughout a wage strike by their members. The union said police sabotaged a union demonstration which was to take place at Sasol's Rosebank office. Police apparently stopped buses transporting workers to Rosebank. During the strike, three Sasol workers were arrested and charged with intimidation. They were released on bail of R1 000 each and were

due to appear in court on 26 November. Five others were arrested and released without being charged.

September - two workers were arrested and charged for intimidation following a strike at Seco. Both were given bail of R150.

September - Abe Mbangeni, an Orange Vaal General Workers Union organiser, and David Maruma, a Nactu official in Vereeniging, were arrested at their of-

fices and detained under state of emergency regulations. After six weeks both were released.

September/October - On 19 September, Richard Ramaqabe, a shop steward at Rand Water Board in Suikerbos, was detained under state of emergency regulations. He was released after 23 days in detention. Four other Rand Water Board employees were arrested during a strike for intimidation. They were

released on bail of R300 each and were due to appear in court on 29 November.

October - A Numsa organiser in Krugersdorp, Abissai Nkwe, was beaten up by unknown assailants outside his home in Kagiso. He spent a few days in hospital. When he returned home he received a death threat.