

NEHAWU and COSATU have distanced themselves from calls by public

sector staff associations for strike action. They accuse the staff associations of trying to blackmail the democratic government into abandoning its plans for transforming the apartheid bureaucracy.

The Public Servant's Association (PSA) and Public Service League (PSL), together with 15 other staff associations and unions, have threatened to strike if their demand for a 15% wage increase is not met. They are also demanding a minimum wage of R1 500 per month and equal access to housing subsidies for married women. A strike ballot is being prepared. In the meantime, members have staged protest marches in several centres.

NEHAWU questions what it describes as the "new found militancy" of the PSA and others. The minimum wage demand was formulated by NEHAWU and the union alleges that it has been hijacked by the staff associations. NEHAWU points out that the minimum wage "is of no relevance to members of the PSA, PSL and other staff associations, whose members earn way above this." The union says that the staff associations' real agenda is to win a 15%

Major dispute in public sector



increase for their members who already earn "bloated salaries". This will serve to further widen the wage gap in the public service.

NEHAWU has put forward a package of measures aimed at democratising the public service and improving the position of low-paid workers. The demands include:

- a living wage, with a minimum wage of R1 500 per month
- closing the wage gap, which would involve raising the wages of low-

- paid workers and freezing or cutting salaries at the top
- implementation of affirmative action
- a new grading and training system which will remove apartheid imposed hierarchies
- a central public service forum to negotiate transformation of the public service.

Government has offered a minimum of R1 000 per month, to be implemented only in July next year. COSATU and NEHAWU describe this offer as "totally unacceptable" and as "an insult to the low-paid workers who are struggling to survive, while the bureaucrats continue to live off the fat of the gravy train". COSATU has committed itself, together with the public sector unions, to formulate a programme of action to win the demands of the majority of public sector workers.

In the meantime, it has been announced that the Cabinet will be meeting later this month to formulate policy on the public service wage bill. The objective is to narrow the wage gap while at the same time putting a halt to the growth in government spending. This comes in the wake of President Mandela's announcement that he and his deputy presidents will take a 20% pay cut, while MPs will be expected to forfeit 10% of their salaries.

Deanne Collins

*Some of our biggest reasons
for believing in big business
are some of our smallest.*

If our children are to inherit a country worth inheriting, a financially strong country, big business becomes more important than ever before.

For one thing, like other small countries with big business, it is big business that enables South Africa to compete in the international markets and be a big earner of foreign exchange.

For another, it is big business that provides a stable base from which medium and small business can grow and expand on



A few of the business leaders of tomorrow at play.

a scale significant enough to become major contributors to the wealth- and job-creation processes of the new South Africa.

And that is really what a healthy economy is all about, a mix of big, medium and small businesses operating internationally and internally off a strong, competitive base.

Big business and the South African economy. Inseparable if the new South Africa is to have an economy worthy of generations to come.



ANGLO AMERICAN CORPORATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

Strikes, blockades, settlements

1. More than 6 000 contract cleaners in Johannesburg went on a four-day strike in September, descending on the Department of Labour's offices demanding to be addressed by the Minister of Labour. The workers, all members of Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), were demanding the establishment of an industrial council, higher wages and improvement to their working conditions. According to Jerry Ngcobo, TGWU's cleaning and security national organiser, the Natal council has been operating since March this year, while the Cape Town one has been in operation since September, and the Johannesburg workers' demand is for the extension of these councils into a national one.

According to TGWU organiser Boy Nethavhani, workers embarked on unprocedural strike action on 12 September after employers unilaterally implemented a 8,08% increase. The workers rejected this, and instead demanded a living wage of R1 500 per month and a 20% increase. The management increase represents R56 on a minimum of R376 per month.

Nethavhani said big contract cleaners like Pritchard are not interested in the establishment of an industrial council. But the smaller companies, organised under

the National Cleaning Contract Association, are eager to participate in the process.

The workers suspended their strike to allow for negotiations with employers to continue. A report back on the employers' response to the workers' demands will take place on 16 October.

Nethavhani said if employers do not agree to the establishment of the council, workers might resume the strike.

2. About 6 000 security guards went on strike in Johannesburg on 3 October in support of demands for a 12,5% increase and the establishment of an industrial council. The guards, members of TGWU, also demanded the Security Officers' Board to be replaced by the council. The employers body, the SA National Security Employers Association, agreed to start negotiations with the union on their demands.

Ngcobo said that although 98% of security employers voted against the national council earlier, they have now agreed to start negotiations with TGWU on this issue on 12 October. The employers had initially agreed in 1993 to the formation of the council after a protracted strike in



William Matlala

Striking cleaners

Natal, but later reneged on that agreement.

The Natal security workers went on a two-and-a-half week strike at the end of 1993, demanding, amongst others, the setting up of an industrial council. Workers returned to work after the employers association agreed to seek a mandate to negotiate the constitution of the industrial council. These talks were scheduled to start in March this year.

3. About 100 Spoornet drivers blocked the two access roads into the City Deep in Johannesburg depot on 5 October. The workers, all members of SARHWU, were demanding an end to sub-contracting at the depot. The workers claim that since the end of the 1987 strike, management has increased the pace of private operators, thereby reducing the number of drivers from 600 to the current 130. Workers were offered retrenchment packages, while

others were transferred to other depots. Some of the owner-driver sub-contractors are those who have accepted packages and used these to purchase their trucks.

"We no longer have enough work to do, as the new system owner-drivers of trucks to do most of our work," said driver Daniel Madua. Another worker said the workers, although they still receive their monthly salary of R2 100, have lost out on benefits like bonuses and overtime pay.

The workers said the blockade was not planned, it happened spontaneously when they arrived in the morning. "When we arrived, there was no work for us, while the private operators' trucks were loaded and ready to go out," said Madua. "We then decided there and then that we cannot allow this situation to continue."

4. Postal workers embarked on strike action in the former "independent" homelands of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and the Ciskei. The workers were demanding salary parities with their counterparts in other parts of the country as well as the recognition of their union, POTWA.

Meanwhile, eight depots in the Cape peninsula were also hit by strikes on 27 September when nearly 5 000 workers staged sit-ins. The workers were demanding a moratorium on unilateral restructuring of postal services and supporting the demands of their colleagues in the former TBVC "states".

5. Richards Bay Minerals

and 2 000 NUM members are in dispute over wages and working conditions. NUM is demanding a 10% increase, while the company is offering a 9,5% wage increase. The workers are also demanding housing allowance parity with their white counterparts. White workers receive a housing allowance of R1 600 while black workers' allowance ranges from R436 to R730 per month.

A conciliation board meeting on 19 and 21

September failed to resolve the dispute, and workers voted overwhelmingly in support of strike action. Management locked out workers on 29 September, claiming that workers were sabotaging machines. According to NUM, the company has failed to substantiate its claim, despite repeated calls by the union for written evidence of this. The workers have not yet embarked on strike action, as the company locked them out first.

■ At the same time, NUM has resolved its dispute with the Chamber of Mines on Adult Basic Education and Training. The dispute was resolved on 27 September, following a conciliation board meeting.

The agreement specifies



Striking security guards

three basic aims of the programme, namely:

- To provide workers with an education and training base for further learning;
- To develop workers' skills and knowledge to participate more actively in the process of change within the mining industry and in the country as a whole; and
- To contribute towards removing all discriminatory barriers within the industry, particularly racial ones.

■ NUM and De Beers reached settlement on wages and conditions of employment after the dispute was referred to arbitration. The wage increase agreed to range from R90 to R232 per

month. The new minimum for the lowest paid will be R1 124 per month.

6. SACTWU and the National Union of Leatherworkers reached a wage settlement of 11,5% with footwear employers. The two unions conducted joint negotiations with the employers, and the agreement will apply to all workers.

■ Textile negotiations will not be conducted at a centralised level, due to the time involved in setting up a central bargaining structure. According to SACTWU, a document outlining this structure has been circulated to employers for signing, but they have not done so as yet. The negotiations will therefore be conducted at plant level for next year's wage increases, which are due in January.

7. About 350 Johannesburg municipality bus drivers brought the CBD of Johannesburg to a standstill when they blockaded streets with their buses on 6 October. A striking shopsteward told the *Bulletin* that workers decided to "go it alone because the union proved to be useless". The workers were demanding higher wages. According to the shopsteward, the strikers told union officials they could be "observers" while workers conducted negotiations. The blockade ended in the early hours of the morning when it was agreed that the workers' demands would be addressed in a negotiating forum.

9. The suspended FAWU

regional office bearers of Natal and the four branches comprising the region, launched a supreme court application to declare their suspension from the union as unconstitutional. The application was first launched in the Rand Supreme Court at the start of the COSATU congress in September. The region also challenged their exclusion from FAWU's delegation to the congress. The presiding judge, however, dismissed the urgency of the matter. The applicants hinted at the possibility of launching another application in the Cape Town supreme court after the end of COSATU's congress.

The dispute is the result of amendments made to

FAWU's constitution on a new organisational structure for the union. The amendments revolve around the reconstituting of branches, regions and locals. After the constitutional conference that passed the amendments, branches and regions were expected to relaunch structures in accordance with the amendments. The Natal region failed to relaunch as ordered by the CEC of the union. The region and its four branches were subsequently suspended. Ernest Buthelezi, the assistant general secretary of FAWU, said the dispute will be discussed with the region at an NEC meeting to be held around November.

Zolile Mtshelwane

Teachers demand 18,4%

Organisations representing teachers have papered over their differences and have put forward a single set of demands to government.

Wage negotiations got off the ground last month. The conservative staff associations announced that they would not be seeking a wage increase. The SA Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) rejected this stance. The union called for the equalising of teachers salaries and threatened to back its demands with action if necessary.

During the last round of talks, the employee organisations managed to reach agreement on a single wage

demand. They are demanding that, after parity has been taken into account, the total salary bill for teachers be increased by 18,4%. The precise allocation of this money will be decided at a later stage of negotiations.

The state responded by saying that it cannot negotiate wages until the national budget, which will only be finalised in November or December, is available. SADTU says it is "outraged" by this response and has accused the state of negotiating in bad faith. Government has now undertaken to set out provisional guidelines for salary increases.

Deanne Collins



Politicians aren't the only ones breaking new ground in the new South Africa.

We are too. We're helping the communities near our mines establish market gardens to provide vegetables for the local people.

Through our life-skills training programmes, people are acquiring the knowledge to make their own bricks and pottery and learning how to sew.

We're also providing training for women who wish to establish daycare centres as a service to their communities.

Developing and supporting this kind of small business is as important to us as it is to our people.

Breaking new ground? We've really only scratched the surface, but all new projects need time to grow. The successes we've already had have put us ahead of the government's call for big business to get involved in community upliftment programmes.



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