

FOCUS ON

**The
Labour
Relations
Amendment
Act**



Report on overtime ban

The Second Workers' Summit called for workers to stage a national overtime ban in October as part of the Anti-LRA campaign. LABOUR MONITORING GROUP monitored the overtime ban in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal region.

On average 36% of organised black workers in the manufacturing industry in the PWV area have participated in the first industry-wide overtime ban in South Africa. But only 15% of employers surveyed said they were prepared to negotiate the demands raised by the Anti-Labour Relations Act campaign. In contrast to SACCOLA

which is actively pursuing negotiations, nearly half of the employers said they intend restructuring their labour force to prevent this kind of action in future. Eighteen percent intend to introduce a new shift system which will make the need for overtime work unnecessary. Three percent are intending to close down operations or relocate their plant to low-union areas; 9% are laying off workers who participated in the overtime ban; a further 9% will in future employ casual labour to work overtime rather than permanent employees working overtime; and a further 9% have removed some benefits enjoyed by permanent employees such as subsidised loans for car purchases, assistance with food and flexibility of starting and ending times.

The overtime ban should be seen together with a range of worker actions starting with plant-based protests on 1 September, culminating in the massive stay-aways of September 5th and 6th and continuing with the call



The Labour Monitoring Group monitored a sample of companies in the PWV area to assess the percentage of unionised workers who observed the call for banning overtime. The call was part of organised labour's campaign against the Labour Relations Act. It is important to note that the data was gathered by questioning Personnel and Industrial Relations Managers. The accuracy of the survey therefore, depends on management supplying the correct information.

The sample of companies surveyed involved all unionised companies monitored by the LMG during the September stay-aways (this amounts to 70% of a 25% sample of PWV companies employing 100 or more employees). Monitoring took place every week for 4 weeks (over the period 2 October to 26 October) in order to investigate the development of the response to the ban over a month long period.



for a ban on overtime, a generalised consumer boycott and a series of protest marches during October.

Average figures obtained from the survey show that 34% of black workers observed the overtime ban in the first week, 42% in the second, 32% in the third week and 38% in the fourth, giving an overall average of 36%.

The results of the survey show a considerable difference in the success of the overtime ban in different sectors. These differences stem from different conditions in the different sectors such as the nature of the production process and the relative importance of overtime work, the relative strength of the different unions, and the extent to which workers depend on overtime rates to supplement their incomes.

The following table shows the percentage of black workers in each sector who observed the overtime ban. The results indicate the labour movement's ability to mobilise a significant section of the organised workforce to enforce a ban on overtime, overcoming the reluctance of workers to forfeiting some of their income.

The construction, commercial and retail sectors were not monitored after the first week as it became clear that no overtime ban was being implemented by the work-forces.

The paper and wood, the metal and engineering, and the chemical industry (in the first two weeks) had significant participation. Metal and engineering, and chemical workers' response dropped off towards the end

Industry	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Paper & Wood	44%	57%	54%	61%
Metal & Engineering	46%	36%	30%	23%
Textile & Garment	18%	20%	19%	17%
Food	8%	35%	33%	30%
Chemical	46%	53%	24%	10%

of the 4 week period - it appears they were not able to sustain their initial high rate of response because of the loss of income caused by refusing to work overtime. The percentage response amongst textile and garment workers remained constant at around 18-19% of black workers. The food industry, which started off very slowly, picked up in the second, third and fourth week, averaging a 33% response rate over the 3-week period.

The percentage *change* in black workers' response each week can be charted as follows:

Industry	Week 1 - 2	Week 2 - 3	Week 3 - 4
Paper & Wood	13	-	37
Metal & Engineering	-10	-6	-7
Textile & Garment	2	-1	-2
Food	27	-2	-3

This table shows that in most sectors (excluding metal and engineering) the percentage of workers who refused to work overtime increased between the first two weeks, then dropped off in the third week and generally levelled off in the fourth week.

It is clear from our survey that the overtime ban, along with the other pro-

test actions, is putting pressure on the employers. Despite the advanced stage of negotiations between SAC-COLA and the labour movement, it is not clear from this survey whether the pressure will force the employers to meet organised labour's demands to negotiate the terms of the Labour Relations Act or not. ☆

NUMSA Strike Survey

NUMSA Wits Region undertook an analysis of all NUMSA strikes over a period of 5 1/2 months (May to mid-October). NUMSA's Hassan Lorgat says the analysis has been extremely valuable for assessing union strategies, strengths and weaknesses. The survey also helps to monitor the impact of the LRA. The survey reveals a sharp deterioration in industrial relations - a return to industrial war.

National strike statistics

One striking feature of all 'statistics' on labour action produced by eminent management consultants Levy, Innes, Beaumont *et al.*, is the extent to which their figures conflict

with one another. While Innes claims that 344 386 'man days' were lost during the first quarter of 1989 (excluding private sector and agriculture), Levy claims that there were in fact only 348 614 worker days lost for the first six months of the year and Beaumont follows on with a figure of 75 442 for the first quarter!



An area of some agreement however appears in their "reason for strike" barometers, which all register that strikes over wages (and conditions) outstrip all other reasons for strike action. (Figure-wise however one has again to allow some latitude.) Briefly summarised these barometers suggest the following:

Cause	% of all strikes
Wages	50 - 75
Discipline	8 - 16
recognition	3 - 12
retrenchment	3 - 8

One last point which emerges from the reports of these consultants is that NUMSA remains the most militant of all unions measured in terms of strike action. According to Levy, for the first 6 months of 1989 NUMSA's strike rate of 26,4% was nearly double that of PPWAWU which was in second place with 14,9%, followed by CWIU (12,6%), FAWU (11,5%) and CCAWUSA (6,9%).

NUMSA statistics

Research carried out by NUMSA organisers in the Witwatersrand region for the period May to October