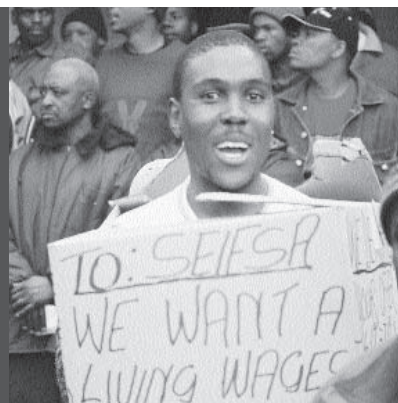
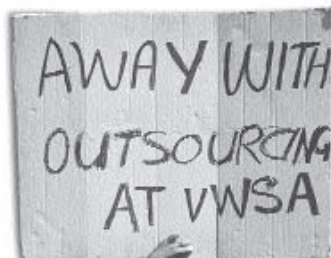


One day wage strikes in vogue



UNION NEWS

Wage negotiations in some of the key sectors of the economy deadlocked as parties began to focus on the national strike held on 27 June, called for in support of jobs. The **Labour Bulletin** reports on some of these negotiations.



A number of unions utilised the national strike against job losses called for by Cosatu on 27 June to highlight their own wage demands. In the metal and engineering sector, the National Union of Metalworkers of SA (Numsa) conveniently called for a one-day strike in support of their wage demands tabled with the Steel Engineering Industry Federation of South Africa (Seifsa) on 27 June. On the eve of the strike, it appeared that the parties were moving closer towards some sort of deal during informal discussions. At the time of going to press, Seifsa had offered 5,8% for the lowest paid and 4,8% for the highest paid workers. The majority union, Numsa was demanding a range of 9% for highest paid to 10% for the lowest. Aside from wages, the union was demanding a two-year agreement and an increase of between 6% and 10% in the second year. Numsa also wants the use of labour brokers in direct production processes 'unequivocally outlawed' and changes to leave pay and the afternoon allowance. The dynamics within the bargaining council negotiations appeared to have changed slightly as attempts were made by smaller employers to play a more dominant role than in previous years.

Whilst expectations of a settlement in metal and engineering were on the cards, negotiations in mining was set to take a rather long and tough course, especially in light of massive retrenchments facing the industry. Negotiations got underway with the NUM demanding that it would not settle on wages until all outstanding issues from the 2003 agreement had been implemented. Such an approach has been informed by the fact that over the years agreements have been entered into but key items never implemented. This leads to a situation where year after year the same demands are tabled, agreed to but workers do not see the benefit because of a lack of implementation. Negotiations on the platinum mines such as AngloPlats was

continuing while an early settlement was achieved at the Lonmin mines. The agreement entered into provides for a five-year wage deal with increases linked to inflation and a profit share scheme. In view of the length of the agreement, the first of its kind, a review will be conducted every two years.

Municipal workers have also indicated their intention to embark on a one-day strike on 5 July in support of wage demands following a deadlock in negotiations with South African Local Government Authority (Salga). Employers had offered 6% and a multiyear agreement while the union was demanding 9% or R400 whichever is the greater plus a minimum wage of R3 000 and a single year agreement.

Meanwhile, the four day strike at Metrorail at the beginning of June fizzled out after the United Association of SA (Uasa) accepted managements' offer of 4,5%. This left the United Transport and Allied Trade Unions (Utatu) in a weaker position, leading to their return to work. The strike initially only involved members of Utatu and the Uasa - both affiliates of Fedusa while Cosatu's affiliate, Satawu had settled before the strike on 4,5%. The other two unions were demanding a 6,5% increase while management had offered 5,5%. During the strike, Cosatu claimed that white workers predominantly drove it, which was rejected by Fedusa. 'More than 50% of the strikers are non-white and Fedusa takes exception to Cosatu's totally uninformed stereotyping of its affiliates'

Satawu has, in the interim, entered into a three-year wage deal for security guards in the Eastern Cape. The increase for the lowest paid guards has been increase from R980 to R1050 a month (R70 increase) in Ciskei and Transkei. The rate is slightly higher for guards in other parts of the province.

Other low paid workers, such as construction workers in the Western Cape will receive an average increase of 8%. The agreement struck in the Cape building industry bargaining council is also a three-year deal. 13