IMF expels two SA trade unions

The International Metalworkers Federation (IMF) has expelled two SA trade unions and has warned its affiliates to get rid of apartheid in their organisations or be expelled as well.

This far-reaching decision was taken at a meeting of the IMF's Central Committee in Rome last month.

The move has come after years of conflict between metal unions operating in South Africa.

Automobile and Allied Workers' Union (NAAWU) and the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) -- both FOSATU and IMF affiliates -- made certain allegations concerning the activities of other IMF affiliates to a visiting IMF delegation.

The four unions submitted a memorandum to the Warsaw commission asking that blacks should do military service on the border before they were given apprenticeship training.

They have also practised segregation by either working only among white workers or by having parallel unions for workers of different races, normally dominated by the white unions.

At last month's meeting, all the parties were present and each union was given a chance to present its point of view. After considerable debate the SAWEU and AEU were expelled while the other two unions were given a year to get rid of apartheid in their organisations and put their house in order.

IMPLICATIONS

The decision has several important implications. It is the first time that a major international body has taken action against South African unions for practising apartheid.

It is also feared that some of the expelled unions may try to use the stop work order exemption recently granted to MAWU by the metal industrial council, of which those unions are members.

It is believed that the South African government took an interest in the proceedings and it was reported that a representative of the SA embassy had met with at least one of the expelled unions in Rome.

COUNCIL

Metal unions affiliated to the IMF used to meet together on a co-ordinating council, which became defunct two years ago when the conflict between them worsened.

Now, following the expulsion, the remaining IMF affiliates will meet to see if there is sufficient common ground and goodwill to revive the council.

Quick jump in PG profits

PLATE Glass (Pty) Ltd recently refused to meet a 15 percent pay demand by workers organised by the Glass and Allied Workers' Union, saying it could only afford a 4 percent increase.

However, the company quickly changed its tune when workers started collecting money for a strike fund and deposited their contributions of R20 a week with the company's personnel officer.

The original offer was suddenly increased to 15 percent and the threatened strike was called off.

GAWU's Wesley Durn has commented: "It's sad that management has been compelled to strike action after paying workers their just rewards. Before the strike threat, Plate Glass management produced figures to prove to workers that they could not afford more than a 4 percent increase.

"Suddenly, however, they found the money. Workers should not be hoodwinked by management statements about profitability."
SOUTH African workers lost an important battle when Mavi, president of the Black Municipality Workers Union, died in a car accident last month.

Mavi’s death a loss to SA worker movement

Joseph Mavi, president of the Black Municipality Workers Union, died in a car accident last month.

Joseph Mavi came to prominence in July 1980 as the leader of the Transvaal’s first major attempt by workers to strike when 10,000 workers stopped drinking beer at the Brits Brewery and brought Johannesburg to a halt.

The strike followed a recognition dispute over the appointment of a white manager.

Mavi was later fired from his job as a security guard.

The new ruling is likely to lead to further unrest in the region.

French unions will support FOSATU

CHRIS DUMILLI, president of FOSATU, recently attended the annual congress of the French Trade Union Federation, the CFDT, which was held in Paris.

According to the CFDT, the congress debated on:

- international solidarity for all workers
- solidarity on equality of men and women workers
- solidarity against retribution caused by the introduction of new machinery
- solidarity with trade unionists from the Third World, including South Africa, especially those involved in the struggle against the government’s policies.

POLICE crack down on Brits march

The police have questioned NAWU and FOSATU officials and have also arrested several workers.

One worker, who is a leader of the NAWU, was arrested.

The police have also been working closely with the management of the Brits Brewery.

The police have issued a warning to workers not to participate in any illegal activities.

The police have also pledged to protect the rights of workers.

In a statement, FOSATU said: “We are confident that our members will continue to support the workers’ rights movement.”

Mavi’s death a loss to SA worker movement

Joseph Mavi’s death could come at a time of unrest for the workers’ movement.

The workers are concerned about the government’s policies and the increasing number of arrests of trade unionists.

However, the workers have also expressed their solidarity with Mavi and his family.

They said: “Mavi was a true leader of the workers and his death is a great loss to the workers’ movement.”

French unions will support FOSATU

French unions have expressed their solidarity with FOSATU and have called for solidarity with workers in South Africa.

They said: “The workers in South Africa are facing a difficult situation and we are determined to support them.”

Police crackdown on Brits march

The police have arrested several workers and have also questioned FOSATU officials.

The police said: “We are determined to protect the rights of workers and prevent any illegal activities.”

They have also pledged to support the workers’ rights movement.

The police have also expressed their solidarity with Mavi and his family.

They said: “We are proud to have a leader like Mavi and we are determined to support his family.”

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Thousands strike in Richards Bay

Twelve workers in hospital after police action.

VET another major dispute has broken out over the pensions issue, this time in Richards Bay. Two weeks ago, 100 workers from the MAWU-organised Allast factory and 500 from the TGWU-organised Richards Bay Sugar Mill were involved in a strike, which was ended after the management agreed to pay workers their normal wages for a minimum of 12 months. The latest dispute, involving 1,200 workers, is at the Allast factory, which makes textiles and is owned by the Eastern Textile Limited, which is said to have refused to pay the workers their normal wages.

The workers were demanding an increase of 30 cents immediately and 20 cents in January, raising the current minimum wage from R3.31 to R3.81 per hour. The workers were also demanding a management offer of R4.05 a week.

The management has refused to negotiate and has threatened to dismiss the workers if they continue to strike.

The TGWU and MAWU have called for a national meeting of all textile workers to discuss the pending dispute.

JEFFREY VIJALE, president of MAWU and chairman of the shop stewards' committee at Allast, has added:

"Police intervention and the threat of violence under the Intimidation Act have not solved any problems and can only lead to worse confrontation in the future."

The National Union of Textile Employees (NUTE), which represents the workers, has called for a national strike if the workers' demands are not met.

Effective strike rights demanded

The effective strike rights demanded by the workers are not yet recognised by the law.

SITUATION

According to the TGWU, the Allast workers have been working on a strike for several weeks and have not received any wages.

The workers are demanding a raise of 30 cents per hour and a management offer of R4.05 a week.

The TGWU has called for a national strike if the workers' demands are not met.

The National Union of Textile Employees (NUTE) has also called for a national strike.

LITTLE JOY AT PUTCO

Despite what management has said in the past, Putco, South Africa's biggest private bus company, has not been able to meet its obligations.

From 1975 to 1981, the value of Putco's bus fleet increased from R25 million to R75.5 million, and in the year 1980/81 the company's turnover increased by 12 percent.

And yet, in May this year, the company agreed to increase wages by a mere 16 percent.

This means that the lowest paid workers are getting a basic wage of only R5 per week, whereas the highest paid workers R10 per week.

UNHAPPY

The TGWU is extremely unhappy about these increases. The company has not been able to meet its obligations.

RIGHT TO PICKET

Several delegates who had been consulted said that they were not happy with the results. They said that the company had not been able to meet its obligations.

If workers could not stand outside the factory gates and exert moral pressure on strikers, which is common practice in democratic countries, they were more likely to resort to violent forms of pressure, they said.

REPORT BACK

The right to hold report-back meetings during strikes was also raised, delegates said, as this was the only way in which discipline and collective decisions could be taken on a voluntary basis.

RESOLUTIONS

The seminar also voted to recommend the following resolutions on strikes to the central council:

● The right to an effective legal strike should be written into the law and the present delays in the official procedures removed.

● Unemployment payments should be affected by the fact that a worker has been on strike.

● SOFASALU should not object to an anti-strike clause in any agreement. Instead, an effective and speedy disputes procedure should be agreed on in the right to strike should be negotiated.

LATEST WAGE INCREASES

HERE is a list of some of the wage increases and other benefits won by FOUSAU unions in recent weeks:

KWAZULU-Natal (Edwarddale):

NUTU wins 31 cents per hour in the mining industry.

NATIONAL UNION OF TEXTILE EMPLOYEES (NUTE):

NUTU wins 31 cents per hour in the mining industry.

NATIONAL UNION OF METAL WORKERS (NUMWA):

NUMWA wins 31 cents per hour in the mining industry.

NATIONAL UNION OF MISCELLANEOUS WORKERS (NUMW):

NUMW wins 31 cents per hour in the mining industry.

NATIONAL UNION OF MINING WORKERS (NUM):

NUM wins 31 cents per hour in the mining industry.
Support grows after strike victory

HAMMARSDALE in Natal is becoming an important new centre of FOSATU growth. Only two months ago, the NUTW had 3,000 members in its Hammarsdale factories. Now, it has already broken the 5,000 mark.

One of the reasons for the increased support for the union is its success in the recent Progress Knitting strike. Earlier this year, Progress management took a fairly tough attitude towards the NUTW. It eventually agreed to give stop work facilities to the workers, and granted no shop steward representation or negotiation rights. Two fired

Then, at the beginning of May, management fired two workers for reasons which their fellow workers in their department felt to be unfair. A strike was called and the shop stewards and the workers went to the union office.

They agreed to return to work on conditional agreement negotiated with the union.

Management re-employed the two workers - but then fired two others on the grounds that they had incited workers to strike. A delegation of six workers representing the whole factory was then sent to management to protest.

POLICE CALLED

The company responded by saying they were not going to be sold by the workers who hire them and fire, and called in the police to arrest two of the demonstrators - James Nuthalga and Beauty Mphatle. Both spent several days in prison without being charged.

This triggered off a full scale strike by all 400 workers, which lasted for days. It also threatened to spread to the other textile factories organized by the NUTW in Hammarsdale.

The strike set off a movement among the workers to form their own union. The union met with other management to get them to interven-

SUPPORT FOR THE STRIKE

And shop stewards' committees in several factories approached their management independently to warn them of the danger of the strike spreading if the dispute was not quickly resolved.

Meanwhile, meetings were also held in the Mpopomulanga township to build support for the strikers.

MARCH 9, 1969

On March 9, all 1,600 Progress workers marched to the factory, with many workers from other factories either coming in or showing their support in some way.

With this show of militancy, the company's determination began to crack.

Earlier, the company had distributed leaflets in the township, saying it would not negotiate with the union over the strike under any circumstances and that it was employing new workers.

SOLIDARITY

However, solidarity in the area was so great that only thirty workers applied for jobs in eight days.

After the march on the factory, the Department of Manpower also got worried and persuaded the company to take back all the workers and to negotiate union recognition.

Workers returned to work on May 13 and negotiations began. On June 4, shop steward Samuels took place and workers voted in the two representatives arrested by the police as senior shop stewards.

LEGAL ACTION

The strike was a clear legal action against the police for holding the two workers for longer than 48 hours without laying a charge.

Senior shop steward James Nuthalga has said: "Workers in Hammarsdale have good reasons to be pleased with their union. They are now flooding to our offices to join".

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