

FAWU BULLETIN

Newsletter For Members and Staff

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Police Shoots At Women Workers

Police in Athlone shot at a crowd of female workers on October 7, 2008 when they reported for duty to AliBaba in Athlone Industria, Cape Town. The company had embarked on a lockout after our members embarked on a temporary work stoppage the previous day in an attempt to solve an organizational rights issue.

They were refused entry to the premises and had to sign an agreement in which they admit to so-called "unprotected industrial action". After unsuccessful attempts to meet management, the latter called in the police, who, without trying to verify facts, sided with the company and intervened with force without any provocation. Two female workers were shot in their legs with rubber bullets during the confrontation. FAWU feels the police should not forget that they are there to protect and serve and not to act as security guards for private companies.

We were shocked at the police brutality, especially since our members complied when the company and police insisted that we should not block the company's entrance and should not gather in the road. Members wanted to resolve the matter peacefully by having a mass meeting in which to prove to management that the majority of the workforce (ninety percent) are members of FAWU and therefore is entitled to negotiate on wage issues.

Workers returned on October 15, 2008 with final written warnings. Two were suspended for two weeks. Zane Marthinus, regional organizer at the time, felt that the union compromised a lot but the company continued with bad faith negotiations, which is against the spirit of the agreement between the two parties.

Highlands and Belfast Spar Workers' Strike Close Shop For Weekend

Around 48 members of FAWU embarked on a protected strike at both SPAR shops in Belfast and Highlands in the Mpumalanga province from October 5, 2008. Local

organizer, Shirley Mabuza reported that the strike went so well that one shop had to be closed last weekend.

It's also been said that the community and local councilor supported the striking workers in their demands for a 12 percent wage increase for all workers, a six percent employer contribution towards provident fund as well as a fifty percent guaranteed bonus in December.

While the union met the company on October 14 to further discussions, management is stubbornly sticking to their offer of 11 percent across the board. They have also employed casuals and try to threaten people by telling them they will be dismissed when they don't come to work. The shopsteward Sakhile Dlamini said, "They have fed their lies to the local newspaper here, trying to incriminate our members".

"Our members were even prepared to compromise in accepting an eleven percent wage increase should the company agree to the 6 percent provident fund contribution", said Sakhile. "Only a few people are getting provident fund benefits and that is unfair, it's discrimination. Management keeps telling us lies and making false promises and when it comes to time for implementation, they say the company cannot afford to give us provident fund and proper bonuses. Yet they opened a new SPAR last year in Belfast, which doesn't make proper business sense".

Sakhile added, "We are having another meeting with them this afternoon. I hope we make progress."

FAWU Supports Sugar Cane Workers' Strike in Colombia

The Food and Allied Workers' Union is in support of about 18 000 Colombian sugar workers organised in the National Union of Sugarcane Cutters who have been on a month-long strike since September 15, 2008.

The workers are rightfully demanding a living wage, reduced hours of work, improved working, health and educational as well as formal work contracts, union recognition and a collective bargaining agreement. Labour contractors exploit employees and do not care to provide any benefits to workers.

It is these workers' right to have a permanent job with decent health and retirement benefits, especially in an industry that is hazardous and physically demanding. Because of the sweat of these workers, Colombia has a booming sugar industry and it therefore makes perfect sense that these workers' demand should be heard fairly.

FAWU calls upon the employers association ASOCANA, and the Colombian government to go back to the negotiations table and end to the slavery type situation in which these poor workers find themselves. It is extremely disappointing that these

two forces have chosen to use police brutality instead of healthy discussion with the union to reach a common understanding between parties.

FAWU hopes the Colombian government and the Sugar Cane employers will come to the table ASAP for the sake of the industry and to give workers the benefits they are entitled to.

FAWU Welcomes Amendment To Competition Commission Act

FAWU is elated that the Competition Amendment Bill has been passed by the National Assembly and will soon be signed into law by the President.

Hopefully company bosses will now think twice before engaging in any cartel activities as the amendment bill strengthen the Competition Authorities' powers in terms of dealing with corrupt company bosses.

Directors and executives found guilty of cartel activities can now be legally prosecuted and may face jail when found guilty of engaging in cartel activities. We are disgusted that these company bosses could engage so shamelessly in anti-competitive conduct robbing the poor of access to basic foodstuffs, especially under the current economic crisis facing the majority of citizens.

We commend the Competition Commission in the excellent work it has done in uncovering cartel activities in various sectors over the past two years. We have full confidence that they will continue to do so.

Domestic 'Burial' Scam Resurfaces In Free State

The Department of Labour has warned employers and workers in the domestic sector to be on the alert of criminals posing as Labour officials with intentions to rob employers under the pretence of collecting money to bury their deceased domestic workers.

The latest scam hit the Welkom area in the Free State this week, where the employer received a call from a bogus official demanding that an amount of R3000 be paid immediately into a bank account to help transport the body of [the employer's] "deceased" domestic worker. The employer then called the domestic worker's second employer to inform him about her death, only for the same domestic employee in question to answer the phone herself.

This criminal activity follows similar incidents reported by the Department earlier this year as having taken place in Cape Town, Pretoria, Johannesburg and Durban amongst others.

The modus operandi of the perpetrators was to phone residences during the day and identify themselves as UIF officials. They would then ask to speak to an unsuspecting domestic worker.

The purpose of such a call would be to extract information about the workers employment status such as hours of work, salary, days of work and whether the employee sleeps in or out. They will also ask the employee their names, telephone numbers of the next of kin and telephone numbers of other domestic workers in the area.

The perpetrator/s would then call the employer at the time they knew the worker was not on duty and act as a relative of the worker. They will then use the information gathered and swindle money out the unsuspecting employer by claiming that the domestic workers has died in an accident and that money was therefore needed for the burial .

Labour Spokesperson Page Boikanyo urged the public to immediately report any suspicious activity to the police. “No Labour official was allowed to call employers or employees to demand money. He said families of deceased UIF contributors need to approach any nearest labour centre to apply in person for death benefits.

“The Department of Labour’s inspectors are the only officials who are allowed to carry out inspections by prior arrangements. They will have identification on them and still they are not allowed to receive money from employers. Our inspectors do not carry their business by phone.” He added.

Released by Department of Labour: October 22, 2008

ANC Dissidents Must Go Now!

The SACP in the Western Cape wholeheartedly concurs with the sentiments expressed by the ANC president when he quotes Former President Mandela in ANC Today **Volume 8, No. 41** • 17—23 October 2008 as saying;

"In Congress there are still many shady characters, political clowns, place-seekers, saboteurs, provocateurs, informers and policemen who masquerade as progressives but who are in fact the bitterest enemies of our organisation. Outside appearances are highly deceptive and we cannot classify these men by looking at their faces or by listening to their sweet tongues or their vehement speeches demanding immediate action. The friends of the people are distinguishable by the ready and disciplined manner in which they rally behind their organisation and their readiness to sacrifice when the preservation of the organisation has become a matter of life and death. Similarly, enemies and shady characters are detected by the extent to which they consistently attempt to wreck the organisation by creating fratricidal strife,

disseminating confusion and undermining and even opposing important plans of action to vitalize the organisation".

Nelson Mandela during a Presidential address to the Transvaal ANC congress in 1953 entitled: No Easy Walk to Freedom".

The SACP regards the opportunistic behaviour of ANC members, ANC councillors, ANC MP's, ANC MPL's and ANC Cabinet members using the ANC's resources to poach ANC membership for the new Black DA of Lekota and Shilowa as counter revolutionary and criminal.

Within our ranks we have charlatans who must be regarded as the enemy of our people in the National Democratic Revolution. All of a sudden the Freedom Charter has become the rallying cry of the latter day ANC DISSIDENTS ...**BUT**... we must ask the question as to where were these shady characters when the working class demanded the fullest and most resolute implementation of the Freedom Charter, which amongst other things declares, "The people shall share in the country's wealth".

Western Cape challenges of division and dissent:

The SACP in the Western Cape are abundantly clear and conscious of the fact that the ANC confronts serious challenges. We are clear and mindful of the fact that the 1996 class project entrenched itself in the Western Cape within the echelons of provincial ANC government including the ANC as an organisation. For the 1996 class project to continue to function it has to create divisions and factions in the organisation since it cannot survive without these divisions.

The dissidents have made it clear that it cannot tolerate the SACP and Cosatu's influence in the Alliance. In the Western Cape we have experienced a consistent undermining of the SACP and Cosatu for more than a decade. There were consistent efforts to push the Alliance partners to leave the ANC something, which we refused to do because ANC was painstakingly built into a revolutionary liberation movement with the most energetic participation of trade unionist and communists. No one to the ultra right or ultra left will succeed in terminating the revolutionary tripartite alliance unless we come to that conclusion ourselves.

The pre & post ANC Western Cape Conference factional discord:

Before and after the ANC Western Cape conference our province witnessed the deep-seated divisions, which are located within the paradigm of the 1996 class project in both their approach and behaviour.

The SACP in the province understand and sympathize with some of the genuine grievances and concerns of different comrades. However we are of the firm view that such grievances and organisational problems can only be dealt with inside the structures of the ANC and not in any Convention, which seeks to liquidate the ANC and revolutionary alliance.

History has repeatedly shown that no individual is bigger than the organisation. No individual interest will ever defeat the National Democratic Revolution.

Lessons must be learned from how the masses and liberation movement defeated renegades such as Unita, Renamo and other counter-revolutionary forces on the African continent.

COSATU North West press statement on so-called split in the ANC

The Congress of South African Trade Unions in the North West condemns strongly those who align themselves with the so-called 'Terror' party, which will be launched in the coming two weeks.

Those who are busy recruiting for the new party within the ANC are telling people that the current ANC leadership has deviated from the founding principle of the movement, but they cannot explain to the public what their principles or policies are. What they are doing to the public is to present themselves as power-hungry, opportunist, careerist and populist.

Terror Lekota must be reminded that the Freedom Charter does not represent individuals but the whole people of South Africa, so the clause that says "all shall be equal before the law" includes the people of Khutsong, who were terrorised by Terror during the 2006 local Government election campaign when he was chased away from Khutsong by members of the community fighting for their rights as per the constitution of South Africa and the Freedom Charter.

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