



T&G NEWS

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Cde Alfred Freed!

First agreement for seamen

Last year TGWU signed the first recognition agreement in South Africa for African seamen with Unicorn Line. In the past T&G signed agreements with shipping companies but these agreements covered shore workers and not workers at sea.

Unicorn Line is a big national shipping company in the Grinrod Group of companies with 11 ships carrying cargo up and down the coast.

Seamen work under dangerous and bad conditions with low pay. Seamen are out at sea for long periods away from their homes and families. Unicorn Line contracts out seamen to do work for a British company called Cunard. Cunard pay Unicorn R1,729 a month for the seaman and Unicorn only pay the seamen R675 a month! It is also unjust because shore-based Unicorn workers earn R879 a month.

Now we are negotiating wages for the first time for these seamen. The bosses gave the union a 20% increase on the minimum wage of R675. The union is also demanding a 25% increase for all workers, and the bosses are offering between 15% and 17%. The bosses say that workers do not need a higher wage because they can do a lot of overtime and earn good wages! Seamen often have to work 176 hours overtime a month!



Unicorn workers' negotiating team in front of Unicorn Lines' ship.
From left to right: Cdes. B Mlumbi, A Gcwabaza, S Zungu, C Luwaca.

picture by: David Hemson

The union has now declared a dispute with the company over wages. We know the company can pay higher wages - after all, Unicorn are paying R120 million for a Polish company to build the company 2 new ships!

This year Mrs Ndlovu got the best Christmas present of her life - Alfred Ndlovu, husband and father, and T&G First Vice President. Alfred was released from Robben Island as part of the Pretoria Minute agreement.

Comrade Alfred was detained under the Internal Security Act in October 1987. Alfred was a shop steward at Sizanani KwaZulu Transport, Vice President of T&G, and COSATU's Natal Regional Chairperson. For 10 months he sat in prison with no visits. In June 1988 Alfred came to court charged with Attempted Murder and Terrorism.

The state claimed that Alfred assisted an ANC MK member called Mjitha. They claimed that Mjitha wanted to kill an Inkatha member, and that Alfred drove Mjitha to an Inkatha meeting where Mjitha opened fire on people at the meeting. The state said they could not find Mjitha so they could not bring him to court.

Some of Alfred's co-workers were called to the trial to give evidence against him. The workers gave no important evidence against him.

Then in February 1989 the court found Alfred guilty of Terrorism and Attempted Murder. Alfred got 5 years in prison. Alfred did one year of his sentence, and now he is back again with us.

We welcome Alfred home in the union with great pleasure. Alfred has been in T&G for many years and he is also an important leader in the PMB area. He helped other unions to organise workers

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Briefs

Bosses refuse Transiton workers

Last year the bosses at Transiton, a trucking company in Boksburg, dismissed 90 workers. Workers joined T&G in 1985 but the bosses still will not deal with the union.

In April last year the bosses came with a new contract and demanded that workers sign it. The contract said that workers could not take part in any strike or other industrial action. So workers refused to sign the contract. The bosses then dismissed them.

The union took the bosses to the industrial court. In November the court said that the bosses must reinstate the workers, and the bosses must pay 3 months back pay. But still the bosses will not give the workers their jobs back. The workers' case is now going to a review court and the workers have to wait again for justice to be done.

First ever security recognition

In October last year Fidelity Guards' bosses and workers signed the first ever recognition agreements in the contract security industry. One agreement covers 250 national keypoint guards and the other agreement 2000 traditional guards.

We also recently signed the first Provident Fund agreement in the contract security industry with Fidelity Guards. The Provident Fund has a Board of Trustees to run the Fund, and bosses and workers will have equal representation.



Workers welcome comrade Ndlovu with a shield to 'defend our gains and advance the struggle'

Agreement at goods industrial council

In November last year negotiations on the Goods Transport Industrial Council came to an end after mediation. This Goods Council covers 16000 workers in the Transvaal. We negotiate with the bosses' association, the Motor Transport Owners Association (MTOA). The MTOA represents 500 goods transport companies.

Goods transport workers are worried about the big gap in wages between drivers and general workers. So workers pushed for higher wages for the low paid and won a 19% increase for general workers - so general workers now earn a minimum wage of R140 a week. Drivers won a 15.5% increase so they now earn a minimum of R200 a week.

We also closed the gap between drivers and general workers on the Subsistence Allowance. General workers now get R23.70 a day and drivers R24.50 a day. Workers get this Subsistence Al-

lowance if they are working more than 15 hours a day. We also won a 20% increase on the Holiday Bonus and Sick Fund.

A big victory was the setting up of a Provident Fund to cover all workers in the industry. The bosses will pay 5% towards this fund and workers 3% of their wages. These contributions will start from July 1 this year. Workers can move to any company in the trucking industry and carry over their contribution to the Provident Fund.

Many T&G workers will benefit from this Fund as there are many trucking companies with no company provident fund. The union also spoke about the dangers for workers of carrying dangerous chemicals. The bosses agreed to talk more about this on the Council this year.

This agreement now becomes a law so all companies falling under the IC in the Transvaal

have to give workers these things.

We still need to struggle for a lot more on the Council this year. For example, we won an increase on the minimum wage but we did not make the demand for an across the board increase for all workers. In T&G most of our members earn above the I.C. minimum wages so they do not benefit from this increase. It is mainly non-unionised workers who will benefit from this increase. This year we must fight for an increase for all workers!

We must also fight very hard to make this Transvaal Goods Industrial Council into a NATIONAL Industrial Council. T&G transport workers must unite all over South Africa and have one set of negotiations for all workers.

This will make us stronger and will mean all truckers in South Africa will benefit from these negotiations.

FORWARD TO A NATIONAL GOODS INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL

Cde Alfred freed!

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in that area, and he was important in trying to bring peace in the area. Now we have to fight to get Comrade Alfred's job back at KwaZulu Transport. Workers in Maritzburg held a WELCOME HOME rally for Alfred. They said they would fight to the last for Alfred's reinstatement.

Welcome home, Comrade!



Workers at Lehmbecker in the Transvaal and workers in a number of other T&G companies brought their kids to work as part of COSATU's Childcare Campaign. They demanded that the bosses provide childcare for workers' children. At Lehmbecker and at PE Technikon the bosses agreed to provide childcare if the workers tell them what they want. T&G National Womens Forum also committed the union to fight for childcare in all companies. The Womens Forum said that all branches must talk about the problem of childcare and work towards a national TGWU Childcare Day this year.



Workers and civics march through the streets of Pietermaritzburg to demand an increase in bus subsidies.
picture by Elaine Anderson

Bus industry in crisis

Bus crisis - Why?

Workers in the bus industry feel the crisis every day. Bus workers are retrenched all the time, depots are closing, fighting for a decent wage increase is very hard, and the bosses often discipline workers for very little reason. At the same time the bosses put up bus fares all the time so that passengers suffer.

Last year about 2000 bus workers lost their jobs. In T&G our members lost jobs at PUTCO Springs and Wynberg, and PUTCO have also closed down depots in Alberton and Edenvale, and they want to close down the Mamelodi depot. Tollgate Holdings also want to close down their bus companies in P.E. and Empangeni. IBL closed down their Welkom and Pinetown depots, and KwaZulu Transport are talking about closures and retrenchments.

Why are bus workers and passengers squeezed like this? Over the last 5 years the government has cut back on bus subsidies. The government still pays out R626 million in

bus subsidies but inflation has cut badly into this money.

At the same time the government removed laws against taxis operating on bus routes. So the taxi industry has taken away many passengers from buses.

It is clear that the government's policy is to move towards privatisation of the passenger transport industry. In this way the government wants to end the bus subsidy altogether. Private bus companies and taxis will then just operate the routes where there are a lot of passengers and money to bring in. Passengers will have no say in the cost of fares, and no say in where buses and taxis go.

Unions organise bus campaign

Last year T&G, SARHWU (S.A. Railway & Harbour Workers Union), and TAWU (Transport & Allied Workers Union) came together to talk about the crisis in the bus industry. We decided to start an "INCREASE BUS SUB-

SIDIES CAMPAIGN". This is the first time that unions in the passenger transport industry have come together to run a campaign. The 3 unions decided to organise worker and community marches all over the country.

So on December 1 people marched to demand an increase in bus subsidies. In many areas, in Johannesburg, Pretoria, and the Vaal, we did not get permission to march. The police also raided union offices in Pretoria and took away pamphlets telling people about the march. But in the end 1500 people marched and handed over our demands to the Department of Transport.

In December the unions and SABOA (S.A. Bus Owners Association) met with the Deputy Minister of Transport. We put forward our demands for increased bus subsidies to him. We explained that that bus industry will die within the next year if the state does not increase subsidies. We will meet with the Minister again to have further discussions.

What are the unions demands?

- We demand a long term increase in bus subsidies from the state.
- We demand that all school students' bus fares are subsidised. At the moment mainly white students are subsidised.
- We demand that all pensioners can travel free on buses.
- We demand that unemployed workers are subsidised.
- We demand that the state take over the financing and running of buses. People in the community must say where they want buses to run, and they must be able to afford the bus fares. Private companies can never provide a people's bus service because their main interest is profit and not people.
- We call on the state to stop cuts in the bus subsidy at once.



Where to next?

In 1991 the Bus Campaign continues! We must decide where to go next with the Campaign.

All locals, and branches must talk about the bus crisis, and workers must work out action with local civics. Then the unions will hold a national shop stewards meeting to take this action forward.

It is very important to talk about the campaign now because tomorrow there may not be a bus industry to talk about!

Bantustan bosses are union bashers

T&G is organising hard in the homelands and the bosses we are meeting cannot believe that workers have rights.

Struggle at TRTC

In the Transkei we are struggling with the Transkei Road Transport Corporation (TRTC). This government company employs 2000 workers and it is the main bus service in the Transkei.

TRTC workers at Butterworth were sick and tired of dismissals. In August last year 57 workers were dismissed without a hearing. So workers stopped work to ask the bosses to explain what was going on. The army was called in and workers were suspended.

Workers at the TRTC Umtata Depot then went on strike and demanded that the bosses explain the problems at Butterworth.

The bosses called the police and the police forced workers out of the company. Then the Transkei army started driving the Umtata depot buses. Soon after, the bosses served a court interdict to stop workers from disturbing the running of the Umtata depot. This interdict was extended

Another Bantustan another struggle

Workers at A.J. Gray Security in the Kangwane homeland lost their jobs last year in April. A.J. Gray is a national company with about 400 workers. They have 4 depots in Kangwane.

The company have a contract with the Kangwane government and security guards work in the central government buildings, the hospital and the magistrates offices.

In April workers came out on strike because the company did not give them an increase in wages. Also there was no job security and workers were dismissed all the time. At this time it was against the law for unions to organise in Kangwane.

The strike ended in the dismissal of 33 workers. The company then employed scabs from outside Kangwane.

to all 2000 workers in TRTC and workers at all TRTC depots were locked out! The Transkei army took over the driving of TRTC buses. The bosses would not talk to the union and so we waited for the court hearing to reply to

After a long time the bosses agreed to arbitration on the dismissals of the workers, then the bosses went against this agreement. The union then decided to meet with the government and get the government to speak to the company.

At the same time COSATU was talking to the government about the right to organise in Kangwane. The government agreed to allow unions to organise and to use the Labour Relations Act that operates outside the homelands. The government said the LRA would operate from the beginning of January.

Now we are waiting for the reinstatement of the workers. And we will also start going through the steps of the LRA.

We will go on fighting until the workers are back at their jobs!

the bosses' interdict. Just before the court sitting in November the bosses came to an out of court settlement with the union. The bosses agreed to reinstate all interdicted workers at once. But by the end of January the

army were still driving buses and the workers were still locked out. This was clearly against the law.

In January the T&G General Secretary phoned Holomisa in Transkei. He told Holomisa to tell the TRTC management to stop acting against the law and to reinstate T&G workers. He reminded Holomisa of the law saying that unions can organise in the Transkei. T&G called a press conference in the Transkei and said that the union will organise mass action against TRTC.

Then, at the end of January TRTC reinstated all workers except for 100. TRTC say the 100 workers must go to a disciplinary hearing.

The bosses also moved all the Umtata workers to Butterworth, and all the Butterworth workers to the Umtata depot! Workers are very angry at this victimisation.

We will fight all these things in the courts and we will start mass action. The company must stop playing around with the union. They must sit down with workers to negotiate a recognition agreement, wages and working conditions.

Victory for cleaners

Cleaners toy-toyed down the streets in November last year to shout their victory to the world! After years of struggle contract cleaners have won a National Contract Cleaning Industrial Council. The Industrial Council covers 25,000 workers - many are low paid and exploited women.

Manpower must still register the Council but the bosses agreed to start negotiations around wages and working conditions at once. There are 2 unions on the Council - T&G with 10,000 members and the Brushes & Cleaners Workers Union with 2000 members. The unions negotiate with the bosses in the National Contract Cleaners Association.

After negotiations the agreement with the bosses will be law. This means all contract cleaning bosses must abide by the conditions in the agreement. But now the bosses are saying they will not negotiate until the Council is registered. Cleaners are angry because they have waited a long time. If the bosses do not hurry up we will declare a dispute.

Steiner workers flex their muscles

Cape Town workers at Steiner Services, a laundry and dry cleaning company, went without wages for a month to fight for a living wage. We salute these workers for their bravery and unity.

The 250 Steiner workers came out on a legal strike in November. Workers demanded a R40 across the board increase and the company was offering R22. Many of these Steiner workers earn the minimum wage of R105 a week so their demand was for very little indeed.

On the first day of the strike the bosses interdicted strikers from picketing on company property. The bosses got Army trucks to bring scabs in to work. Later the union got permission for 20 workers to picket.



Mamosa Chopo, chief shop steward at Steiner Services in Cape Town

T&G workers at the University of Cape Town quickly came out in solidarity with Steiner workers. UCT has a contract with Steiner so university workers refused to handle Steiner laundry.

In the end the bosses stuck at a R25 increase and work-

ers went back to work. In T&G we condemn the Steiner bosses for putting profit above starvation wages. We would like to see Steiner bosses living on R105 a week!

After the strike the bosses started disciplinary actions against strikers. Workers refused to go one by one to disciplinary hearings so the bosses went ahead without workers. The bosses then dismissed 15 workers.

The Steiner bosses think they won this strike. They still have a lot to learn. An angry workforce is the worst kind of workforce.

Angry workers produce less, so in the end the bosses lose out. And for the Steiner workers this is only the beginning of their struggle for better work conditions.