

EAST DRIEFONTEIN WORKERS STRUGGLE FOR JOBS

11 500 EAST DRIEFONTEIN mineworkers went on strike in February this year after management refused to see to their grievances. More than 800 were dismissed, 19 shaft stewards arrested and 145 injured in two days of violent police and mine security action.

After seven months of court battles, the 19 shaft stewards were released. In spite of their innocence they were not given their jobs back by the mine bosses of Gold Fields of South Africa. Many workers who had gone on strike were not often given their jobs back. NUM NEWS spoke to two of the dismissed East Driefontein workers about their fight to get jobs on the mines. Comrades Simon Tladi, 35 years old and Phillip Motsamai, 46 years old are both shaft stewards. They come from the district of Leribe in Lesotho.

N.N.: When did you start working at East Driefontein?

Tladi: I joined in 1975 after I spent a year at Rustenberg Platinum Mine. Phillip joined in 1971, but he has more than 28 years experience in the mining industry. We both started as general labourers underground. I eventually became an aptitude tester while Phillip is a section team leader.

N.N.: Can you tell us briefly about the strike?

Motsamai: The workers had many grievances. They rejected the induna system; the early-return bonus system; assaults by white miners on blacks; the bad food in the hostels and demanded proper representation at disciplinary hearings. Although we made many appeals to management, they refused to attend to our grievances. So the workers went on strike. Many workers were injured, dismissed and arrested because of the strong police and mine security presence. The strike lasted two days with many workers fleeing to the nearby mountains.

N.N.: What happened then?

Tladi: I was among those arrested. Phillip managed to escape and inform the union office of what was happening. The arrested shaft stewards stayed in jail for three days before we were released on R300 bail each. Our case dragged on for over six months. Each time we appeared the magistrate would postpone the case. Eventually they released us because there was no evidence to support their case.

N.N.: What did you do then?

Tladi: We asked the magistrate about our jobs but he said that it had nothing to do with him. Management refused to take us back, so we were forced to go back home.

N.N.: How have you been surviving all this time?

Motsamai: It is very hard. I have se-

ven children all at school. They have been told that if I don't pay their school fees, they will be sent home. My wife does not work. So there is no income. We have to live by asking friends and relatives. Our land is too small to plough, so we can't grow food on it. We are starving.

N.N.: Is there any work in Lesotho?

Tladi: No, there is nothing, but even if you get a job, you are paid very little. I have standard 10 but I still had to come to South Africa to work as a labourer.

N.N.: Can't you get a job in another industry?

Tladi: No. The contract between the Lesotho and South African Governments is that we can only work in the

mining industry. This is our third trip to look for a job. We have a 14 day travel document so if we do not get work in the next few days we must go back home.

N.N.: What are you going to do now?

Motsamai: We are on our way to Welkom for the last time. We are hoping that there will be work.

N.N.: Why do you think Gold Fields do not want to take you back?

Tladi: They want to break the union at their mines. They removed the whole leadership of the union. Only three shaft stewards are left. So the union has to build up the shaft steward structures again. It will take time but we will succeed. The workers will always support the NUM.



Comrade Takatso Ramahajoe injured by police during the East Driefontein strike



GO WELL COMRADE SEBOPA

ABOUT 800 mineworkers from various regions attended the funeral of comrade Klaas Sebopa, the NUM's administrator in Soweto on October 5.

Comrade Sebopa died suddenly of a heart attack on September 23 at Baragwanath Hospital.

Born on August 21 1938, comrade Sebopa worked more than 15 years at TEBA. He became one of the first union organisers and played a leading role in establishing branches. In 1984 he was promoted to the position of administration co-ordinator at the union's head office.

In a moving ceremony, with banners waving and workers' songs, comrades paid tribute to the commitment, sacrifice and courageous efforts of comrade Sebopa in building up the NUM.

Comrade Mothibeli, former regional chairman of Carltonville, said that Comrade Sebopa was a dedicated fighter for workers' rights.

"He was a quiet man who got on with the job. He never got angry with the workers and patiently sorted out their problems. We have truly lost a good trade unionist."

He added that comrade Sebopa was committed to the fight for free-

dom and that the workers' movement has lost one of its valuable sons.

Comrade Barayi, vice president of the union praised our fallen comrade for his contribution in building the NUM.

"With people like comrade Sebopa, our union was assured of moving from strength to strength. His death is a major blow to our organisation. But those around him have learned from his example and will have to carry the struggle forward. That is the best way we can honour his memory as a fighter of the workers."

Office colleagues will remember comrade Sebopa as a modest and tireless worker whose patience and grace will be sorely missed.

"Though death has robbed us of a fighter, comrade Sebopa would want us to continue the fight for liberation until victory is won. That is the cause he stood and he died for," said a colleague.

To his wife, Eunice and the children, Adelaide, Leonard, Clement, Ruth, William and Rodwell, we say:

BE STRONG, KLAAS DIED IN THE SERVICE OF THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT.

NEWS BRIEFS

Overseas exchange visit

THE NUM president, comrade James Motlatsi led a delegation of the union on a month-long stay to Canada and the United States of America. Included in the party were Abe le Roux, Namaqualand regional chairman, Jeffery Magida of the Educational Department and Monoko Nchwe of the Research, Information and Publications Department. They were invited by the Canadian Labour Congress and will meet mineworkers' and metalworkers' unions during their visit. Comrade Magida will spend an extra month in Canada on an educational course.

Health and Safety

A seminar on Noise was organised by the Health and Safety Department of the union and the Technical Advice Group. About 40 shaft stewards and union officials attended, where the effects of noise at the workplace

were discussed. The results of the seminar will go into the Health and Safety manual, which will be prepared by the department.

New Miners' International

A new mineworkers' International — the International Mineworkers Organisation (IMO) — was formed in Paris, France recently, in opposition to the Miners International Federation (MIF) to which our union belongs. Led by the British NUM president, Arthur Scargill, the IMO has 40 miner and energy workers' unions.

They include unions from Australia, France, Chile, Nicaragua, Middle East and Eastern Europe.

South African Mineworkers' Federation

Unity is steadily being built by mineworkers' in Southern Africa. On

November 18 to 21 all the mineworkers' unions of Mozambique, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and other neighbouring countries will gather in Harare, Zimbabwe to discuss the problems facing miners in the sub-continent. This is the second meeting held this year and it is hoped that a federation of mineworkers' unions will be formed.

New Region

More than 4 000 mineworkers attended the launch of the Secunda Region of the NUM on August 17 in Embalenhle Township. Over 10 000 mineworkers have already been organised and the region is growing rapidly. Secunda region suffered a spate of strikes in July this year.

More than 28 000 worker were involved. And it has been at these mines — Braken, Kinross, Leslie — where membership has been growing.

DIAMOND MINERS WANT NUM-BER ONE!

AFTER a bitter battle with the Black Allied Mining and Construction Workers Union (BAMCWU), the NUM has won majority support of the De Beers diamond miners in Kimberley. This strengthens the union's position in the De Beers Company, because all the miners in Namaqualand and Pretoria have been organised.

Manne Dipico, Kimberley organiser, said that the organisation of the miners was difficult.

"All the workers live in the townships and the work irregular shifts. So we had to recruit house to house. That took a lot of time. BAMCWU, the rival union, also caused a lot of problems and kept attacking NUM in the local press and at meetings.

One union — one industry

"But all we said to the workers was one union, one industry and that we

had organised the majority of the De Beers' miners elsewhere. They knew where their interests were best served," said comrade Dipico.

Because of the support which the union has at all the De Beers mines, a joint shaft stewards' council will be formed to represent the workers.

Regional growth

Although Kimberley (Northern Cape) is one of the youngest regions, membership has increased steadily. Comrade Dipico said that because the mines were scattered over a wide area, it was difficult to organise. But, he was confident that it was only a matter of time before it would become a strong region.

"The manganese, cement and lime miners are next on our list. We'll be number one in the mining industry," he said.

