American Companies Support Racism and Try to Crush Strike

Since December, 1971, contract laborers in Namibia (South West Africa) have been on strike. Namibia is controlled by the white racist government of the Republic of South Africa, in spite of United Nations decisions that the mandate of South Africa is invalid. South Africa has refused to accept such decisions, and maintains the discriminatory policies and repressive controls which led to the mandate being taken away. Political dissent and labor organization alike are illegal, but still Namibian workers went out on strike all over the country. They were protesting the contract migrant labor system which brings workers from "reserve areas" away from their families to work in the industries and farms of white South West Africa. The country is divided into the southern "Police Zone," for whites, and the northern area "reserved" for Africans. Africans and Coloureds live in the Police Zone in order to work for white enterprises only.

WAGES: $28 per month

The largest employer in Namibia is the Tsumeb Corporation, which produces lead, copper, and zinc. In 1971 the company had 6600 workers: 1300 whites and 5300 Africans. Almost all of the African workers were migrant contract workers. In 1971 the average African wage at Tsumeb was $28 per month, with a minimum of 70 cents a day ($21 per month). The lowest paid white worker (really a supervisor) received starting wages of $444 per month plus bonuses in 1971. The strike hit Tsumeb as well as other companies in Namibia. An "agreement" signed by the South African government and tribal chiefs paid by them (signed without consulting the workers) was reached in January, and the South African government has been using force to drive the workers back to their jobs. A press blackout prevents much information getting out, but Judge William Booth, an Afro-American jurist from New York, heard reports while attending a trial of strikers in Windhoek (the capital) of at least 60 people killed in Ovamboland in the north.

Tsumeb Mine American Owned

Tsumeb is principally owned by two American companies, American Metal Climax and Newmont Mining. The two are not exactly household names, but AMAX (American Metal Climax) was 100th largest in assets in Fortune's list of American companies in 1970; Newmont was number 163. AMAX has operations also in Australia, West Germany, Mexico, the Netherlands, Great Britain and here in the USA. It deals with mining and processing of molybdenum, potash, lead, zinc, iron ore, aluminum, and copper. It's also in South Africa and in Zambia. Newmont deals with the same minerals, plus gold, silver, and uranium. It also controls Foote Mineral Company, one of the companies which mines almost all the chrome in Rhodesia, and which has just broken United Nations sanctions by importing chrome.

Same Companies in Wisconsin

These companies operate in the U.S. too. AMAX even has a plant in Marshfield, Wisconsin. The plant in Marshfield is a subsidiary of the Hill Products Division of AMAX, and employs 31 workers in producing sheet aluminum for house sidings, trucks, boats, and mobile homes.
WORKERS THE LOSERS BOTH HERE AND ABROAD

Multinational companies like these get rich by exploiting workers here and abroad. When they can take advantage of a racist police state to forbid strikes and labor organization as in Namibia and South Africa, they keep wages at incredibly low levels. And the profits they get from overseas build them up to resist workers' demands here too. Newmont, for example, owns copper mines in Arizona, and can resist a strike there by keeping operations going in Namibia, and in South Africa. Such actions act against workers in those industries here, and they also depress the general wage level, and combine with programs such as Nixon's Phase II to act against all workers.

SUPPORT NAMIBIAN STRIKERS

The Namibian workers have shown incredible courage by going out on strike in the face of the repressive force against them. Many have been arrested. All need help in supporting their families. They deserve our support.

Send contributions (clearly designated) to: MACSA (Madison Area Committee on Southern Africa)
% University YWCA
306 N. Brooks St.
Madison, Wisconsin 53715

MAP OF NAMIBIA

Angola
Ovamboland
Windhoek
Caprivi Strip
Walvis Bay
Botswana
South Africa