

UPDATE ON THE GIWUSA STRIKE AT RCL FOODS

By: GIWUSA

29 February 2024

Members of the General Industries Workers Union of South Africa (GIWUSA) working at RCL foods in Tzaneen, Loius Trichard and Thohoyandou, yesterday embarked on an indefinite strike due to failed wage increment negotiations.

The workers responded to the call for the strike overwhelmingly. The turn out and the mood at the pickets were great and demonstrating determination to fight. Workers were singing, chanting and toyi-toying in the spirited picket outside of the company premises to show the employer the seriousness of their demands and determination to fight for them.

The workers want wage increases, and the employer has thus far not been meeting their demands. The workers are demanding R600 monthly increase, and the employer is offering R410 which is not only pitiful but regressive compared to the awfully inadequate R450 paid to workers last year.

A big food manufacturer like RCL which owns the country's most famous food brands and employs over 20 000 people's claim that they cannot provide these workers an extremely pitiful amount they're demanding in wage increases, is damning. It reveals not only the obvious fact that capitalism does not even want to meet the basic demands of the workers.

Most importantly, it shows the racial and class brutality of the neo colonial capitalism in South Africa in its determination to perpetuate a regime of primitive capital accumulation based on common slavery of the black working class 30 years into democracy. Workers are earning R 5 100 and that's way too little compared to what the company makes out of the efforts of the workers and the tens of thousands that management reward themselves with.

The Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice and Dignity Group says the household affordability index averages R 5 324,86 and this is for January 2024, compare this to the wages and you'll see that the workers are at a disadvantage. R 2 837,56 goes to food, and these are regular food items like maize meal, samp, cooking oil and rice, then just over a thousand rand (R 1 005, 81) goes to domestic and hygiene products.

The salary is then gone after one weekend of shopping when we include transport, electricity, rent and medication and clothes. That is the reason the workers movement needs a political strategy, organisation and power to overthrow capitalism here and internationally. GIWUSA will in the meantime be engaging with other GIWUSA members in other Sunbake depots including Polokwane, and Pretoria, as well as other brands of RCL we organise, as well as sister unions in SAFTU who also organise other brands of RCL to consider secondary strikes with a view to uniting RCL workers for a national strike as part of our escalation in the event of employer not improving their offer.

For more information, contact GIWUSA President, Mametlwe Sebei on 081 368 0706

This press statement was released by GIWUSA on 29 February 2024.