

Mister Sweet, Not So Sweet After All

By Yonela Gebengu

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Workers at Mister Sweet in Wadeville have been on strike for two weeks, demanding a living wage of R19,500 per month. For ten years, many employees have been earning very low wages of around R6,000 to R7,000 per month. Despite doing the same job, workers are paid different amounts, and no one knows what the basic wage is. Some employees who have been with the company for 22 years are earning less than newer workers, and some are classified as general workers.

Cde Jam-Jam, a Mister Sweet employee for six years, shared his story with fellow workers. He explained how they planned the strike as colleagues, with the help of Simunye Workers Forum, who have been fighting for workers' rights. The strike is about low wages, poor working conditions, and unfair treatment. Cde Jam-Jam mentioned a colleague whose thumb was injured by a machine, but the company did not help.

Workers are seeking support and unity to strengthen their cause. They want to encourage those still working at Mister Sweet to stand up for themselves and not be bought off with promises of salary increases. Fellow workers suggested exposing Mister Sweet's bad treatment on social media, flyers, and other platforms.

The meeting's chairperson asked if comrades were willing to join a peaceful protest at Mister Sweet in Wadeville. The response was overwhelming, with workers singing songs, giving motivational speeches, and receiving support from different organisations. The plan included visiting shops supplied by Mister Sweet and ask that those products be removed from shelves.

The workers believe Mister Sweet is punishing them for demanding a living wage. The company has locked them out of the factory, demanding they accept a three-year wage deal made with two minority unions. Mister Sweet has threatened to reduce workers' wages if they continue the strike. The company also trained casual workers to replace the protesting employees, which workers see as a ploy to divide them.

I think that this strike is more than just about wages. It's a fight against a system that continuously exploits the working class. How are families supposed to survive on the current minimum wage, especially with the rising cost of living? The strike is a powerful reminder that the workers are tired of being undervalued and underpaid. We need to band together, speak with one voice, and demand better for all. This is modern-day slavery, and it must end.

I am not happy with the outcome and feedback that came from the meeting they had with the Mr. Sweet management team yesterday. It shows us that the people in 'power' are keeping wages low to control the masses and it's time for that to change, we are in 2024. We need to end this modern-day slavery, the workers wrote a letter and consulted with the management team from Mister Sweet. The management team negotiated, and they are not moving away from the 7% increase, so negotiations are still ongoing, according to Aqeela Single from SPP.

Millicent from Simunye Workers Union said she was impressed by the comrades' solidarity and unity, supporting each other towards the protest.

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