

## **Editorial note:**

We publish the demands of the workers of Saccawu (at Dischem and Massdiscounters) who are currently on strike; we do so especially as the bourgeois media maintain a generalised silence over many workers struggles during the period of the world cup.

It is the SACP that has taken the lead in pushing for 'labour peace' during this time, refusing to support the recent municipal and transport workers strikes; why do they remain silent over the current strikes at Dischem and Mass-discounters? If they are the real vanguard they should need no invitation to come out and support the strike. Cosatu is in alliance with the SACP, for what? The SACP leaders are BMW ministers who are privatizing education and together with the government smashing workers rights, among them the right of soldiers to unionise. It is the government that has used the world cup as an excuse to hurriedly militarise the police; under the guise of threatening to crush any 'threat' to the world cup they have strengthened the police to crack down on any threat to the capitalist class and the imperialists by the working class; thus the police continue to shoot and harass strikers. The increasing militarization by the state is part of an international trend by imperialism as they, due to a stagnating world economy, are going on an offensive taking back gains won by workers over many years. Thus we wish to dialogue with the worker activists in Saccawu who confuse apparent 'ownership' of MassDiscounters with who really controls; Walmart and the capitalist parasites behind them control Massmart; even a 10% ownership is sufficient for control- it all depends on the secret agreements made behind the backs of workers by the capitalists; this is why from the beginning that Massmart was violently anti-worker and tries at all turns to undermine the existing unionization.

Part of the owners of Walmart is Warren Buffet who recently (in last year) doubled his shareholding in the company. During a food workers strike at Kraft in Argentina recently, capitalist Buffet declared that there is a class war in America and that the capitalists are winning. They expelled the workers from their occupation of the factory, dismissed the worker leaders and re-opened production under police guard inside the factory; they could only succeed in smashing the workers by the co-operation of the top trade union leaders; this shows how important are the alliances that workers make; the time has come for real working class independence from the capitalists; the first step is for Cosatu workers to break from the alliance with the SACP and ANC.

We call for the working class to give solidarity with the strikers at Dischem and Mass Discounters, starting with the pharmaceutical and transport workers but extending to solidarity actions and strikes in the entire working class; if we allow the workers to be defeated, we would open the door for the further 'walmartization' of the working class, ie the smashing of unions. We call on workers to agitate for all unions to open up their doors to casual, part-time and immigrant workers.

Forward to workers power, the only guarantee of workers basic democratic rights!

SACCAWU MEMORANDUM TO DISCHEM PHARMACIES MANAGEMENT 10 June 2010

We the members of SACCAWU; supported by other progressive Civil Society formations; are gathered here today to demonstrate against the Company's failure and/or refusal to negotiate with our duly mandated representatives and meet our fair, reasonable and just demands.

Whilst

our Union is sufficiently representative the Company still refuses to negotiate with our Union of choice despite advice contained in the Advisory Award issued by a CCMA Commissioner. Whilst the Company purports to be a caring employer our experiences on the shopfloor are contrary to this public relations exercise as we have to deal with hostile management attitudes in the form of unilateral changes to terms and conditions of employment in the form of different wages and increases for the same jobs. Despite such divide and rule tactics; which are reminiscent of the old Apartheid Regime which perished in 1994; we are more determined then ever before to transform the workplace since our democratic dispensation would have failed workers and the poor without fundamental transformation at the workplace.

The Company only recognized our Union after a threat of a National Strike in 2009 whilst it purports to be a caring and a benevolent employer. Their refusal to bargain and meet our fair and reasonable demands clearly indicates that they are hell-bent on undermining our right to Freedom of Association which is not only enshrined in the Labour Relations Act but is also protected in the Constitution of the Republic through the Bill of Rights. Whilst Rights that are now protected through the Constitution of the Land were achieved through sweat, blood and tears; of workers and the poor; employers like Dischem Pharmacies are determined to trample upon such rights at the slightest opportunity as they have not yet recovered from the Apartheid era hangover. Management has further demonstrated its opposition to our democratic dispensation through consistent intimidation and harassment of workers who have decided to exercise their right to embark upon this protected strike. We cannot fold our hands and hope for a change of heart on the part of management but we have no choice but to intensify our legally protected and legitimate strike as the Company is only interested in profit maximization and is least concerned about the well-being of its employees. Gone are the days when employers used to trample upon workers rights and get away with it. Now is the time for workers to demand a fair share of their contribution to the Company's well being.

It is precisely because of these reasons that we demand the following:

• Meaningful engagement with our Union aimed at meeting the following fair and reasonable demands:

- A minimum wage of R 3 500-00 per month;
- An across the board increase of 15%;
- All casual employees should be converted to

permanent full-time employees after three months of employment;

- Parental Rights; a subsidized Medical Aid Scheme; a housing subsidy and meaningful long service awards.

- An immediate end to all forms of harassment and intimidation of workers who are currently on strike and are exercising their right to picket;

- That the Company should practice cordial industrial relations.

We further demand that the Company should meet our fair and reasonable demands within 48-hours of receipt of this memorandum. Failure and/or refusal to accede to our demands, as outlined in this memorandum, will compel us to intensify our strike and the boycott of the Company.

#### SACCAWU MEMORANDUM TO MASSDISCOUNTERS MANAGEMENT

We the members of SACCAWU; supported by other progressive Civil Society formations; are gathered here today to demonstrate against the Company's unilateral implementation of its re-engineering/restructuring programme which has already led to massive job losses. We have noted, with dismay that the Company's restructuring programme is not premised on poor financial performance but is only informed by greed for super-profits at the expense of workers who constitute the profit generating machinery within the Company. Whilst the Company; which is a subsidiary of Massmart; would like the unsuspecting members of the public to believe that it has consulted; over its highly exploitative restructuring programme; their statement is devoid of any truth as they were merely going through the motions and satisfying legal requirements without due consideration for the well being of workers as they regard workers as a liability which should be disposed of at the slightest opportunity.

The Company's unilaterally imposed restructuring programme constitutes a sever attack on workers who are already under stress and are still suffering as a result of the recent economic crisis, not of their making, but which arises from the very nature of the capitalist system that is driven to make profits at any cost and irrespective of the costs on lives of workers and the poor.

Such has been the profits of Massmart in the last period that a few years ago the former CEO, Mark Lamberti received a salary of R9.1 million and in 2008 the current CEO received a salary of R6.4 million, which is more than two hundred time the salary of the average wage of Massmart employees. Since the year 2000 Massmart sales have more than doubled from R20 billion to a more than R43 billion in 2009. Even in the period of global recession, Massamrt still increased its sales by more than R10 billion between 2007 and 2009. Clearly the company cannot not plead poverty, thus the reasons for this restructuring and retrenchments are squarely aimed at further increasing their profit

rates through the intensification of the rate of exploitation of workers. While the current round of restructuring and retrenchments is taking place at Massdiscounters (Game and Dion Wired) it will can spread to other divisions of the group.

While Massdiscounters is planning to retrench a total of 1 500 workers the Company is also planning to expand its operations with 20 new stores over the next two years

In the chairman's review for 2009, Lamberti, notes that last year Massmart experienced their first protracted industrial action, he comments as follows, he lists the transition from former President Thabo Mbeki to President Zuma as one of the significant developments that that covered the reporting period. He then goes on to state that this transition, "increased the stridency of populist rhetoric and the vigour of socio-economic demands, both indicative of an open democracy. Service delivery rioters, striking workers, obstructive taxi owners and officious youth leaders all contributed to the first ever protected dispute between certain Massmart divisions and organised labour." This is a clear indication of how out of touch the bosses; who are perched at the ivory towers of their air-conditioned offices; are with the realities on the shopfloor. How convenient to forget to mention that workers had to resort to strike action to increase their minimum wage to a paltry R2 700 per month, how convenient to forget that workers resorted to strike action for greater job security when they demanded the conversion of part-time employees to full-time, how convenient to forget that they plan to open 20 new Massdiscounters stores in the next two years while at the same time preparing to retrench 1 500 workers. Of course Mr. Lamberti was talking to shareholders and here the only thing that matters is the bottom line, return on investment, PROFIT!

And yes, there is the issue of speculation that the worst employer in the world, Wal-Mart is interested in taking over Massmart.

Experiences

of the labour movement globally, when it comes to the expansion of Wal-Mart is, to make your business attractive to Wal-Mart, you weaken if not smash Unions, you increase the vulnerability of workers, you erode job security, you reduce your staff complement and you drive down wages. And this is exactly what we see at Massmart. However even if they do not intend selling out to Wal-Mart as their denials go, they are introducing the Wal-Mart philosophy in the workplace at an astonishingly rapid rate with a typical Wal-mart aggression towards organised labour. In any event with 57% of investors being non-South African, mainly Europe and US investors, it is not difficult to see why the Wal-Mart format is so attractive to Massmart and why the rumours of a possible Wal-Mart buy-out should be taken serious. What a coincident between Walmart and Massmart!

The current unilateral restructuring process, at Massdiscounters (Game & Dion Wired), takes the following forms:

- Retrenchment of 1500 workers, 700 permanent and 800 flexi-time

employees.

- The imposition of ultra-flexi time contracts;
- 40 hour rolling week with Sundays as normal time,
- Compressed working week without overtime,
- Sunday and Public holidays compulsory work,
- All those not faced with retrenchment to reapply for their positions under new terms of employment as outlined above,
- All re-applications to be considered after an interview which will include psychometric testing, which upon failing workers will be demoted,
- All those that will remain in employment will be given new job titles, job descriptions and for many new salary rates,
- The introduction of new Green Light technology that requires tertiary vocational training and the refusal by the company to offer any training to staff except for management.

It is precisely because of this reason that the Union demands that the Company should, halt this super-exploitative restructuring programme, reverse those elements that have already been implemented including reinstatement of all workers who have already been retrenched as a result of this programme.

We further demand that the Company should meet our fair and reasonable demands within 48-hours of receipt of this memorandum. Failure and/or refusal to accede to our demands, as outlined in this memorandum, will compel us to intensify our strike and call for an indefinite boycott of the Company.

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