

Report of the Miners Commission

Group Chair: Tony Maher

Group Secretary: Gino Govender

Attendance: 33 participants

Comrades introduced themselves and each gave a brief input on recent union struggles and the importance of this meeting in responding to the challenges we face in defending and advancing our cause in the workplace, in the community, nationally and internationally.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

THE KEY QUESTION discussed in the group in mobilizing global solidarity action across the resources link chain that involves members in the mining and maritime chain.

BUILD ON OUR MOST RECENT EXPERIENCES AND SUCCESS

e.g the global campaign to win social justice in Rio Tinto, the ILWU/PMA dispute and the boycott of apartheid coal.

In these struggles we identified who are our natural allies and we worked hard to lobby their support and commit to action over a period of time. Members knew the importance of global solidarity and were happy to contribute financially towards campaigns. Campaign plans were devised and communicated both internally and externally. Action was then taken and everybody was involved. We must share our victories continuously so that

One of the most successful international campaigns of the 20th century was the global campaign to boycott and isolate the apartheid regime in SA in support of the liberation movements there.

The key lesson here is that global campaigns if executed properly can and will succeed. Despite the considerable power of multi-national corporations we must not be defeatist. The struggle for social justice cannot be defeated. Sometimes we must suffer setbacks but we never stop the fight.

KNOW OUR COMPANIES GLOBAL OPERATIONS BETTER

What countries they operate in?

Who are their customers?

What products are sold and who buys them?

The AFL-CIO one-stop shop data base on listed companies and collective bargaining contracts was cited as an example that could assist union negotiators in research their bargaining claims long before the negotiations commence.

We need to start improving our communication strategy at the local, national and international

- Our biggest weapon is the collective strength and influence of our members;

- Our members must appreciate that our unions operate in an environment without borders;
- In a globalised sector we are all inter-connected and must avoid complacency;
- When there is a dispute in one location we must understand the impact it will have in other locations and we need to reach out to people there to inform them of our struggles- what the issues behind the conflict are and what support is desired;
- At all times we must be conscious of public perceptions as controlled by the commercial media and union leaders and members must ensure that the correct role and image of trade unions and our objectives are communicated;

OUR NEXT STEPS

We need to identify a campaign target/s and a set of goals; this must evolve around a set of clear demands on to companies in the right to organise; to bargain; health and safety for workers etc; We see this as a practical approach in the run up to the next meeting of miners and mariners;

The top leadership of our unions must be active and involved in planning a campaign over the short to medium term and decide how we will co-ordinate such action;

The unions involved in the mining and maritime solidarity initiative must allocate people and resources to wage this campaign;

The objectives of what we are try to do and what we want to achive must be communicated and discussed with our members on an on-going basis;

Our target must include a high profile company that we want to engage with, a mass education plan on the current practices on corporate greed, the importance of grassroots activism and linking workers in the global production and supply chain using for example an international day of action on which we set a time in during which union leaders stop their normal activity and go out to workers and talk about globalisation and the importance of international solidarity;

Our outreach must include ways in which we are able to organise the unorganised and get them actively involved in union activities;

This conference must mandate this team to immediately activate a campaign that contains these demands and is communicated to our members all over the world;

The miners have agreed that after this seminar that all participants here both leaders and rank and rile will set up an e-mail network in order that we continue contacts between us;