

THE NORTHFIELD COLLIERY STRIKE DECISION.

The action of the African National Congress has been called forth by the very heavy sentences that were imposed on the men involved in the recent strike in the Northfield Colliery in Natal and the negative effect of the legal decision with regard to ameliorating the conditions which gave rise to the strike and acts of violence on the part of these men.

The african National Congress has not come forward because of any complaint about the competence of the presiding judicial officer in this case because Congress <sup>has come to</sup> believes in the effeciency and high mindedness of the judges in handling trial and actions where Africans are involved. Congress, however, does wish to draw the attention of the Minister to the advése comment of the presiding judge on the bad conditions of the African labourers in the said coal mines and to the fact that if these men were legally represented there would have been something said for them in mitigation. To us the sentences imposed on the men seem very heavy in the light of the evidence disclosed at the trial.

The complaints of the men were about food, sleeping accomod low wages and exploitation by the concession store, bullying by the Induna, the difficulty of lodging their complaints, etc.. We doubt whether the ordinary courts where mere points of law are considered and the charge abstracted from the surrounding material conditions are the proper instruments for <sup>correcting</sup> adjusting industrial disputes. Hence the decision of the Northfield Colliery disputes is negative as it does not give the men any relief in the things they were complaining about.

The position might have been different if the case had been referred to a properly constituted Industrial Court if such there be where points of law and economic relations could be decided upon and be immediately operative in the industrial field in the same way as a Wage Board determination. In the absence of such a court, Congress feels that it is for the Government to bring about better conditions in the coal mines and in other industrial establishments.

Congress like the Government regards strikes as detrimental to the countrys war effort, but if a maximum war effort is to be brought about in order to win the war it is necessary for the Government to bring about legislation which will better the conditions <sup>and wages</sup> of the African labourers and in the course of strike

**Collection Number: AD843**

**XUMA, A.B., Papers**

***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:-* **Historical Papers Research Archive**

*Location:-* **Johannesburg**

**©2013**

***LEGAL NOTICES:***

**Copyright Notice:** All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

**Disclaimer and Terms of Use:** Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of the archive of the South African Institute of Race Relations, held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.