

AFRICAN WORKERS

SIR,—May we beg the hospitality of your columns for an urgent appeal to save a piece of work of international importance which must come to an end unless further help is obtained?

In 1928 Councillor W. G. Ballinger, of Motherwell, went out to South Africa at the invitation of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, the Native trade-union organization, as its technical adviser. He found on arrival that, through the ignorance and inexperience of its members, the exploitation of unscrupulous white lawyers, and the severity of the Labour and Pass Laws, this once-flourishing body was in chaos and its treasury empty. Instead of throwing up the job, he laboured for two years to prevent the complete bankruptcy and breakdown of the union. But no expert could, under present conditions, build up any comprehensive and reliable organization of African workers. What Mr. Ballinger was able to do was to keep open a central office as a nucleus of industrial organization, which has served the Natives well in wage-adjustments and legal difficulties. Meanwhile, he has acquired an unprecedented knowledge of the needs and psychology of the industrialized Natives. This knowledge he has used in evidence before government commissions, in advisory educational work amongst the Natives, and in most valuable efforts to bring black and white workers into closer contact and understanding.

His common sense, wisdom, and loyalty have overcome the suspicions with which both black and white once greeted him. He has more recently been co-operating with such bodies as the Joint Councils of Europeans and Natives, and the Workers' Educational Association; he acts as the adviser to the new movement for co-operative trading in the Rand mining area; and his investigations into the effect of industrial conditions upon the Natives of the three British Protectorates in South Africa proved so valuable that the Witwatersrand University both contributed a grant to his enquiries in Bechuanaland and encouraged its senior lecturer in history to accompany him and assist in drafting his report.

The present crisis, however, has intensified every economic rivalry and racial prejudice in South Africa. New legislation is turning Africans off the land they once occupied, and unrest and suspicion are growing daily. Mr. Ballinger's work was never more greatly needed, for only a man who has already won the confidence of the Africans can properly appreciate either psychological reactions or the problems that arise from their sudden impact with modern industrial conditions. He is fitted by every quality of character and experience to undertake that planned process of investigation and relief which may be the only remedy against the rising disaffection. The single obstacle against this is financial.

Hitherto Ballinger's expenses have been met by a Trust Fund supplied both by individuals and by grants from the International and British Trades Union movements. He has received not a penny of the salary originally promised by the I.C.U., and has spent on the work his own capital and savings. He has lived with extraordinary frugality, has twice been seriously ill, and has constantly faced considerable risks of every kind. He has refused offers of highly-paid appointments which would have imposed unacceptable limitations upon his work for Africans. But now the Trust Fund is depleted; owing to the financial crisis, subscriptions have been perforce diminished or withdrawn; and now the work must stop unless the public will support it.

What we need is a regular guaranteed salary of £400 a year for a term of years, with another £400 for working expenses. All money received will be administered through the Trust Fund, audited by Messrs. Howard Pim and Hardy, Chartered Accountants of Johannesburg. At a time when the closer economic relationship of the Empire and the need for avoiding industrial disturbances are in their minds, we appeal to men and women in this country to prevent the wastage of experience, ability, and opportunity, which the loss of Mr. Ballinger to South Africa would mean. Contributions large or small may be sent to Mr. F. S. Livie-Noble, 44, Denbigh Street, Westminster, S.W.1; and will be gratefully acknowledged.

We are, etc.,

OLIVIER.	JOSIAH C. WEDGWOOD.
WILLIAM M. CARTER	SANDERSON.
(Archbishop).	BERTRAND RUSSELL.
LEONARD BARNES.	C. RODEN BUXTON.
H. G. WELLS.	G. BERNARD SHAW.
CONSTANCE MALLESON.	ARNOLD PLANT.
EDWIN W. SMITH.	E. PETHICK LAWRENCE.
F. W. PETHICK	WINIFRED HOLTBY.
LAWRENCE.	FREDK. S. LIVIE-NOBLE.

(4)

South African Unions and the Communist Party.

The Communist Press has been attacking Clements Kadalie, National Secretary of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of South Africa, for the recent policy of his organisation, declaring that since the dismissal of its Communist officials last winter, the I.C.U. has declined in numbers, influence and activity. As Kadalie is at present in England, hoping to interest white workers in his Union, and to obtain international recognition for the black trades unionists, the real facts of this controversy are important.

When the black workers of South Africa formed their first union in 1920, they received little encouragement from the white Labour movement there. A short sighted policy persuaded that white unions that they would do better for themselves by a colour-bar restrictions which reserved the better jobs for white men, than by a united movement to raise the standard of living for all workers. The parliamentary Labour Party showed no inclination to go further than the trade union movement, and since the formation of the Pact government with the Nationalist Party has had every inducement to sacrifice the black workers to ~~the~~ ^{its} immediate, but not its ultimate, advantage.

The only body which made advances of friendship to the black trades union was the Communist Party, which, true to its principles, contained black and white workers alike. Until last December this small body of men and women, having failed to gain influence over the white trades unions turned its attention to the black. They advocated a programme of perpetual strikes, the avoidance of legal machinery, and continual

talk of revolution. According to an interview given last December by Kadalie to the South African press, "they were out to change the entire policy of the union and to have it led and controlled by Communist officials."

The Communists were few in number - about two hundred in the whole country, Kadalie reckons. During last year, with two Communist officials responsible for most of the organisation, not only were membership and finances declining, but the I.C.U. was in a most precarious position. Without international recognition, without legal protection within the country, suspected by the white Labour Party, hampered by legal restrictions threatened by a Sedition Bill which on the least hint of extremism might lead to a disbanding of the whole organisation by an apprehensive government, the black trades unionists far from profiting by their association with the Communist Party were imperilled by it.

Consequently last winter at Port Elizabeth the National Council of the I.C.U. passed a resolution prohibiting members of the Communist Party from becoming officials of the union. At the same time a new policy of demanding recognition was started. A fresh constitution has been drawn up; arrangements were made for affiliation with the Amsterdam International, and by a curious accident, the affiliation of the white unions having lapsed, the I.C.U. became the only South African organisation belonging to the Trade Union International. This May, at the biggest workers' conferences yet held, the black rank and file approved the action of the Council and decided to send Kadalie to Europe to plead the cause of the natives at Geneva, at Amsterdam, and in England.

The new policy proved immediately effective. Ten new branches of the union have opened in the Transvaal this year, seven in the Free State; about 30,000 new members have joined; the finances are in a better condition than they have ever been; property in Durban worth £15,000 was acquired and paid for this April; active protest has been organised against the government's native programme, and demonstrations have been held in January and March against the Native and Sedition Bills. All over the country the industrialised and agricultural native is awakening to the possibilities of organisation.

Meanwhile for the first time the I.C.U. is gaining support from outside. The official Labour Party finds it impossible to ignore an organisation built up on sound trades union lines, which only demands to be brought into line with the international Labour movement. Members of the Labour Party have spoken in support of the I.C.U. in the Cape Parliament, and Kadlie's hope is that his work in Europe and the new prosperity of the I.C.U. may so impress the white workers that they will see the folly of standing aloof, and realise that the only hope for South Africa lies in the united efforts of both black and white. He hopes during his meetings in England to welcome members of the Communist Party, in order that he may justify by arguments a policy which results have already justified.

16.
P R E S S.

ATTACK ON SOUTH AFRICAN NATIVE WORKERS.

Serious developments in South Africa are following the passage, last July, of the Native Administration Act. In spite of the earlier announcement by the Union Government made in response to protests by the South African Labour Party and Trades Union Congress and British Labour, that the Sedition clauses should be withdrawn from the Bill, the Act has finally been passed in a form instituting something very like martial law among the natives. Section Number 29 runs:

"Any person who utters any words or does any other act or thing whatever with intent to promote any feeling of hostility between natives and Europeans shall be guilty of an offence, and liable on conviction to imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year or to a fine of £100 or both".

This clause definitely affects the position of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, a Native Trade Union, which during the last eight years has developed remarkably, and is now the largest Trade Union in Africa, numbering over 100,000 members.

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The I.C.U. has, from its foundation, set its face against arousing antagonism between black and white. Part of the Preamble of its Constitution runs:

"This organisation does not foster or encourage antagonism towards other established bodies, political or otherwise, of African peoples or of organised European Labour".

The Union includes European members, and has constantly sought the support and co-operation of the white peoples.

have issued declarations
In spite of this, the I.C.U. and its Organisers are imperilled by the Act, which has already had practical results. The farmers of Natal, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, that any black farm workers known to be members of the I.C.U. will be ejected from the farms. Already this policy has been put into operation; thousands of natives are being rendered homeless, and the efforts of their Trade Union to assist them ~~xxxxxxx~~ by buying land for them to settle on, are blocked by the Natives' Land Act of 1913, which makes it illegal for Natives to purchase any but Crown Lands. The Government, pursuing its policy of opposition to Native Trade Unionism now refuses to sell Crown Lands to the I.C.U.

The position is critical, and last week a meeting of the National Council of the I.C.U. was called at King-Williamstown to discuss the future action of the Union, X which is faced by this threat to destroy its organisation and to stifle all legitimate expression of native grievances. As a result of the policy of the Government, hundreds of natives are joining the I.C.U. daily, and unless more generous councils can prevail in South Africa, it is feared that the natives will be driven into the fatal paths of nationalism.

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