

Bantu and their Wages

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by
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A man's 'standard of living' is as high as his possession of the 'world's goods' or as the price his labour commands at the labour market. The wages paid the native workers range between ~~£2~~ £3 and £4 a month on the average, is very low especially when one remembers that of this amount, at least £1.5 goes for rent at the municipal location 12/6 to 15/- a month for transport expenses. A man workers have to start work one and a half to two hours earlier in order to save six pence a day in bus fare. These same people often walk home in the evening. With the wage between £3 and £4 a month, it is variously estimated that the ordinary native's family budget averages around £6.10 +. To make up the difference, in some cases legitimate and illegitimate means are resorted to. For instance, mother and children above twelve years may go out for employment in addition to the head of the family or illicit liquor traffic is taken up as a last resort.

Native wages in most places has remained stationary in spite of increased wants and demands upon the average native's purse brought about by education and contact with the white man as well as the fluctuations in the 'cost of living'. Only recently I found out that many people were working for the same wage in cash or in kind as was paid my father some fifty years ago. Ten shillings (10/-

or one sheep a month is still considered a reasonable wage in certain farms. However where wages are in kind the position is more precarious because as soon as a man has a reasonable number of sheep or cattle some farmers want to top the native labourer so much per head per year. In many cases he is forced to go. He however soon finds himself in a greater difficulty in that he has no land of his own to go to or to buy. He may not get a permit ~~for~~ to allow to drive his stock to where he may wish ~~to~~ have been forced to sell their stock rather than pay grazing fees or ~~fees~~ for trespassing with their stock on private grazing grounds.

Here in South Africa the standard of living is ~~based~~ measured by that of the minority group - the Europeans labourers who command higher wages than the African workers. The price of goods produced is usually based upon the highly paid European section. This works a great hardship on the poor native. He ~~buys~~ ^{needs} the and buys the same goods at the same price as the European. Because his wages do not allow him the native labourer must fall in debt to buy decent clothes or or he must wear dirty, filthy, ~~clothes~~ unhygienic cast-off second hand clothes.

~~The Influence of~~ Influence of Certain Legislation upon Native Labour and Wages.

The operation of 'Colour Bar' in industry has a tendency to force all native labourers into unskilled labour class. This brings about an oversupply of unskilled workers. There is no choice

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for ^{unskilled} workers because their supply is greater than their demand upon the labour market. With the new white labour policy this condition is getting from bad to worse in that the native is not only pushed ~~into~~ unskilled labour level but is being pushed out of even the unskilled labour market hence we are having not only a depression of natives wages but also an increasing army of unemployment among the natives. This is leading to greater poverty and hardship among them.

Pass Laws and Native Labour.

The operation of the pass laws have a tendency to limit the black worker's bargaining power in that ~~he is not only~~ ^{he is} given a limited time in which to seek employment. But also because his pass and former labour contract always shows that he either has been satisfied to work for a low wage or has been forced to, consequently most employers may be inclined to offer him no more than he worked for before. Besides, the man, on the other hand knowing that his time will be up in ~~a day~~ ^{six days} and that he may be ordered to go elsewhere where he knows nobody and without money, is compelled to take whatever is offered him.

Under the Conciliation Act ~~that~~ pass bearing natives are not allowed collective bargaining in the way of strike.

All labour should be free to bargain collectively, there should be

- should be seriously considered. Terms of repayment should be made liberal,
- (5) After paying a certain sum as deposit subsequent rent payments to cover the value of the property with interest on the money for the ^{intervening} period should entitle the rent-payer to a deed of transfer for the property.
 - (6) The township should be fixed and permanent. The inhabitants should not be subject to removal or transferred to other areas unless it be
 7. The people as rate payers should have a voice in the affairs of their township.
 8. They have unrestricted trading rights.

These conditions would not only make for a contented Bantu Community but the people would take more pride in their homes and would tend to improve them according to individual taste especially when they know that they are not likely to be removed. Who many people care to be rent payers perpetually when they could buy property by paying as rent?

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