

FEDERATION OF NATIVE WELFARE SOCIETIES

IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA.

WAGE REGULATION.

At the last meeting of the Federation Council I was requested to prepare a memorandum dealing with the representation of Native interests on Industrial Councils and the proposal to introduce a Wage Act making provision for a Wage Board and Wage Determinations.

REPRESENTATION OF NATIVE INTERESTS ON INDUSTRIAL COUNCILS.

Section 14 of the Industrial Conciliation Act makes provision for the establishment of industrial councils consisting of representatives of employers' organizations and registered trade unions of employees. The work of these councils is important and includes wage agreements. Natives are excluded in the definition of "employees" (Section 3, I.C.A.) and in consequence have no official representation on industrial councils. It has been maintained that native interests are considered but the industrial agreements which have been adopted clearly reveal that native interests have been inadequately considered, e.g. the industrial agreement of the Building Industry which fixed minimum rates of pay for unskilled workers at 1½d. per hour in areas apart from Salisbury and made provision for the deduction of 2/- per week if food and accommodation were provided.

It should be understood that no industrial agreement applies to Natives unless a proclamation to this effect has been issued in accordance with Section 31 of the Industrial Conciliation Act, and then applies only to Natives employed within the municipal area and not the area covered by the agreement. Proclamations have been issued to cover certain industrial agreements and, therefore, Native wages have been regulated and Natives brought within the scope of the Industrial Conciliation Act, so far as municipal areas are concerned. It is therefore maintained that Natives should be represented on Industrial Councils. This representation cannot be on a trade union basis because there are no Native trade unions, but it is suggested that there are Europeans who can adequately represent the Native point of view.

This question of representation becomes more urgent when it has been publicly stated that the intention is to bring every industry within the scope of the Industrial Conciliation Act. If this development is adopted the position of the Native Worker will be unsatisfactory unless his interests are adequately represented on the various industrial councils.

Industrial agreements under the Industrial Conciliation Act have secured increased pay for Europeans, but there has been no such benefit for Natives.

THE INCREASED SCOPE OF THE INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION ACT.

As indicated above, it has been publicly stated that the Industrial Conciliation Act machinery is to be brought in to apply to every industry, and it has been suggested that where employers and employees refuse to take the necessary steps to create an industrial council, the Government would take action and set up a temporary Industrial Council. This

proposal is viewed with some concern and the question naturally arises as to how an industrial council can be formed where the employees consist almost entirely of Natives. It is suggested that some industries are totally unsuited to the adoption of Industrial Conciliation Act machinery, e.g. Clothing factories, Tobacco Factories, etc.

The proposal to increase the scope of the Industrial Conciliation Act needs to be carefully watched by the Federation and all who are concerned with the welfare of the Native worker.

WAGE ACT.

The introduction of a Wage Act making provision for a Wage Board and Wage Determinations has been proposed to secure the regulation of Native wages for industries and concerns which ordinarily come outside the scope of the Industrial Conciliation Act. The need for some form of wage regulation is apparent and under present conditions there is in many directions exploitation of Native workers. This position had to be faced in the Union of South Africa and a Wage Act was introduced in 1925. (A year after the introduction of the Union Industrial Conciliation Act). In 1937 a new Industrial Conciliation Act and a new Wage Act were introduced and these Acts are functioning at the present time. It is a significant fact that after several years working under the old Wage Act it was deemed necessary to introduce a new Wage Act as well as a new Industrial Conciliation Act. It appears to be true that so far as the Union is concerned, Wage Act legislation is necessary.

This has a bearing on the suggestion in Southern Rhodesia to extend the scope of the Industrial Conciliation Act and not introduce a Wage Act. The Prime Minister in the House indicated that he was not in favour of a Wage Act for the regulating of Native wages and expressed the view that when the Industrial Conciliation Act had been amended there would be proper machinery for dealing with these matters. Some of the difficulties involved in this proposal have been indicated in the previous section. The Wage Board in the Union established under the Wage Act has provided wage regulation for many trades and industries which could not be dealt with under Industrial Conciliation Act machinery, and up to date something like 150 Wage Determinations have been made.

It is suggested that a Wage Act be introduced making provision for the establishment of a Wage Board and Wage Determinations.

(1) Constitution of Wage Board:

Board to consist of three members with power to add not more than two additional and temporary members for special investigations.

(2) Operation of Wage Board:

On application from Government or from representatives of employers or employees in any trade or industry not covered by the Industrial Conciliation Act investigations to be conducted on following lines:-

(a) Existing conditions of work and wages paid for all types of employment in the particular trade or industry covered by the application.

(b) Cost of living.

/(c).....

- (c) Ability of trade or industry to pay more satisfactory wages if existing wages are regarded as unsatisfactory.
- (d) The assessment of satisfactory wages, including overtime rates, for all types of employment.
- (e) The laying down of satisfactory conditions of work. These to include hours of employment, leave conditions, etc.

Representations made by employers and employees would, of course, be carefully examined by the Board.

(3) Recommendations of Wage Board:

On completion of investigations a report to be drawn up by the Board and submitted to Government. This report to include recommendations covering

- (a) Proposed rates of pay for all classes of employment in the trade or industry,
- (b) Proposed conditions of work to include hours of work, overtime, leave and privileges, etc.

If Government agrees to the recommendations they shall be published in the Government Gazette and one month allowed for objections. If objections are made, the Wage Board to consider these, but the Wage Board to be responsible for the final award. The final award to be binding on all employers in the particular trade for the area specified. Wage Determinations could cover one area or apply to the whole Colony in accordance with the application for investigation.

(4) Non-racial Basis:

Following the Union legislation no Wage Determination could be on a racial basis, though in fixing minimum wage rates for various types of employment, the work usually undertaken by the various racial groups could be taken into account.

The above constitutes a very brief outline of the general working of a Wage Board.

G E N E R A L.

Wage Determinations in the Union have clarified the position of the semi-skilled and unskilled workers and brought about better conditions of work and increased wages, particularly for Native workers.

It is considered that the adoption of a Wage Act is preferable to the widening of the scope of the Industrial Conciliation Act.

The introduction of a general minimum wage for all Native workers as recommended in the Howman Report is not favoured.

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