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Item No 16

NOTES ON MR. RHEINALLT-JONES' DISCUSSION
WITH MR. W.A. POPE, GENERAL MANAGER,
NCHANGA CONSOLIDATED COPPER MINES, LTD.

13TH AUGUST, 1947.

Workers' Organisations and Industrial Conciliation.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones drew attention to Recommendations on "Social Policy in Dependent Territories" of the International Labour Conference in 1945 and 1946 (which were probably embodied in a Draft Convention at the recent meeting of the Conference) which, if adopted by the British Government, will become applicable to Northern Rhodesia. They provide :

1. that the right of association shall be guaranteed to employers and workers respectively;
2. that, where trade unionism has not been developed, the Government shall appoint officers whose duties will include help to workers to develop workers' organisations;
3. that conciliation machinery shall be set up and that all occupations shall be covered; and
4. that employers' and workers' organisations shall be consulted on the constitution of the conciliation organisation.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones emphasised the importance of the Mining Industries on the Copperbelt and on the Witwatersrand being fully prepared to put forward constructive proposals to meet these demands.

Tribal Representatives and Boss' Boys Committee.

Mr. Pope is satisfied that these bodies fulfil their duties. He feels that the Boss Boys' Committee will eventually develop into the Trade Union and this prospective development finds favour with Government. The Boss Boys' Committee would become the executive body to be joined later by members from other spheres of work (surface- transport drivers, clerks, etc.) At Roan this development is already apparent with Boss Boys as solid core of movement.

The Tribal Representatives deal almost entirely with matters arising in the Compound, although now and again matters related to working conditions come up at their meetings, but such matters are brought before the Boss Boys' Committee which deals with industrial matters.

Mr. Pope does not think that dilution of the Boss Boys' Committee with representatives of other sections will lessen the practice of the Committee in bringing forward useful suggestions for improving working conditions and organisation.

/ Government

Government and development of African Trade Unions.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones said that he did not agree that it is the duty of any Government to set aside officers to develop trade unions as it must prejudice the neutrality of the Government in any industrial dispute, and hamper it seriously in dealing with a critical situation which might arise from a strike. He thought that the task put upon Government in the Recommendations was one which should be placed upon the Trade Union Movement itself, and in view of the racial situation in Northern Rhodesia, the British Trade Union Congress should accept the responsibility. He did not therefore agree with the action of the Colonial Office in sending out its own officers to organise African Trade Unions.

For these reasons it is very undesirable for a Labour Officer who attends meetings of the Tribal Representatives and Boss Boys' Committee to identify himself at the meetings with the demands put forward, as was done recently at the Roan Antelope Mine.

Industrial Conciliation.

In the Union the Government has recently published a Draft Industrial Conciliation (Natives) Bill which provides for the registration of African trade unions if they comply with the requisites laid down (similar to those laid down for the registration of Non-African Unions), and sets up a Central Mediation Board (and local boards where desirable) consisting of representatives of the Departments of Commerce and Industries, Labour and Native Affairs, a person with special knowledge of Africans in Industry, and a specially appointed Chairman. Strikes will be illegal, but the Board will have power to act as a mediating body as soon as a dispute is brought to its notice, representatives of the employers and employees being brought together before the Board. If agreement is not found, the Board then automatically becomes an arbitration board, and its findings become law on the Minister's approval being obtained.

This Bill excludes Agriculture and Mining. Mr. Rheinallt-Jones said that while he fully agreed that Mining could not be included in view of the special conditions obtaining (such as the facts that the price of gold is not fixed in the country and increased costs cannot be passed on to the consumer), he felt that public opinion in the Union as well as international opinion as reflected in the Draft Convention and at UNO made it necessary to consider that machinery should be set up for dealing with disputes. Should there be compulsory mediation and arbitration for all, including European workers? In the Union some European trade union leaders were disposed to work for the establishment of Industrial Courts to replace Industrial Councils. Any attempt to make strikes illegal must be accompanied by provision for automatic conciliation and arbitration.

Mr. Pope pointed out that under the agreement between the Copper Mines and the Mine Workers' Union (see Clause 7(d)) there is provision, in case of the failure of a joint conference to agree on any question, for either side to apply for the matter to be referred to Conciliation under the Conciliation law of Northern Rhodesia or, should this fail, to any other form of

conciliation as may be mutually agreed upon. This did not go so far as compulsory arbitration. He pointed out that while an arbitrator's award would be binding on the employers there was no way of binding the workers effectively; they might still strike, leaving the award binding on the employers. Actually, on the Copperbelt the tendency was for the Mine Workers' Union to go on strike and only then to ask for Arbitration.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones expressed his concern lest this should lead to the Africans following the example of the White workers. Every such strike brought the possibility nearer. Would it not be better to be forearmed. He felt that there should not be two different conciliation laws applicable separately to European and African workers.

Mr. Pope agreed that early consideration should be given to the kind of conciliation machinery which should be set up if the British Government pressed for action on the lines of the I.L.C. Recommendations (or Draft Convention).

"Progression" of African Workers.

In response to a question on this topic, Mr. Pope said that he thought the attempts to grade the African workers into Grades "A", "B" and "C" had proved unsatisfactory because it had led to "class consciousness" and "snobbishness". Possibly their classification according to the jobs on which they were employed would be desirable. Differential rates of pay might, however, involve demands from those with lower rates for increases in pay. The Boss Boys are well paid and are able to save considerably.

Mr. Pope said there is little evidence of a feeling of frustration among the mass of African workers, except perhaps among Boss Boys and others at the "top end". He agreed that the Africans were becoming less and less disposed to acquiesce in the colour bar.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones asked: What would be the result of a declaration by the British Government that there shall be no colour bar in Industry in British Colonies?

Mr. Pope thought the Mines would have to accept it and Clause 42 of the Agreement would become inoperative. It must be appreciated, however, that the African is unreliable in certain occupations and close supervision is necessary. He may perform a routine operation correctly five out of six times, but neglect it altogether on the sixth without any apparent reason beyond forgetfulness. He can, however, be trained into a good sense of responsibility, but it will take time.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones asked if he could be given a schedule showing in detail the jobs which were occupied by Europeans and Africans respectively, and the jobs which Africans could do competently if allowed. Mr. Pope thought that he could arrange for such a schedule to be compiled. (Mr. Clark has since shown me a schedule compiled by Mr. Truscott, Manager of the N.R. Chamber of Mines. R.J.)

Referring to the appointment of a Royal Commission on this subject, Mr. Rheinallt-Jones drew attention to the series of Commission Reports in the Gold Mining Industry since 1907 which had condemned the Colour Bar, and also to recent reports of such bodies as the Economic and Wage Commission and the Social and Economic Planning Council. It was now appreciated in the Union that the Colour Bar had a strangulating effect upon the national economy as well as on the mining industry, and that its removal would be the best way of extending the opportunities for the employment of Europeans as well as non-Europeans. Would it be advantageous if he gave evidence before the forthcoming Commission along these lines? Mr. Pope welcomed the suggestion.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones said that direct attacks on the Colour Bar aroused violent reactions and were not the best tactics. Flank attacks offered much greater possibilities. During the war, numerous instances occurred of skilled work being broken up into several distinct operatives requiring little or no training, and large numbers of Africans were employed on these, receiving higher wages where the work called for special skill and aptitude. The aptitude tests now being tried on Africans at the Grootvlei Mine are already yielding important results. Might not big inroads be made on the Colour Bar in mining, along these lines?

Housing.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones expressed disappointment with the housing conditions, but said that he recognised their historical development and the fact that it is still the custom to send children to the rural homes. He asked if it was possible to frame a period programme involving improved housing to the extent of, say, 5 or 10 per cent per annum, and making greater provision for family life on a progressive basis.

Mr. Pope agreed that the present housing was not adequate for family life, and said that the Chamber of Mines favoured gradual improvements. Cost must, however, determine the programme.

Rations or Cash.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones said that he had noted that some of the employees on the Copper Mines were agitating for the substitution of cash for rations. He said that the City of Johannesburg had given in to pressure from the Municipal Native Employees' Unions, with the result that, according to the City Engineer, it cost the Municipality £150,000 a year to make up for the loss of efficiency, (more workers having to be taken on), loss of time through sickness, etc. Mr. Rheinallt-Jones said that he had had experience of the great difference in physical efficiency which resulted from feeding by employers as against the giving of cash in lieu of rations; the Africans economised on food.

Mr. Pope said that he supported this view, but felt that probably it will be necessary to let some classes of employees, e.g. clerks, find their own food, but not at the present time when food costs are so very high.

Trading Stores.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones asked if there were complaints against local stores. Mr. Pope said that there were and that discussions have taken place between the Chamber of Mines and the Government as a result of which it was agreed to experiment at Luanshya with a Co-operative Society for Africans. (Details have been supplied Head Office.)

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones said that it takes Africans some time to appreciate the principles and methods of co-operative trading, and that when the proposals were submitted for his opinion he had suggested that the better way would be to form a non-profit Utility Company or Trading Trust in the first instance, converting it into a Co-operative Society when the time was ripe.

Mr. Pope said that the Government would be opposed to such a proposal in view of the fact that extensive trading rights had been given in most of the townships to encourage trading in earlier years, and the Government could not go back on its undertakings.

Relations between European and African Workers.

Supervisors are employed, as on the Reef, to whom complaints can be made by Africans underground and in this way complaints of assaults by Europeans are brought to the notice of the mine authorities. Mr. Pope considers that the number of complaints is low - much lower than used to be the case. The Court takes a serious view of assault cases.

Cost of Living Enquiries.

The Commission, headed by Professor Burrows, which has been investigating this matter has completed its report, which should be available soon.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones promised to send Mr. Pope a copy of the Cost of Living Study on the Witwatersrand, etc. which he made for the Bus Commission in 1944, to serve as a sample of cost-of-living enquiry methods.

Occupations for African Juveniles.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones said that when he was here in 1941 he was told that the adolescent African in the Mine Compounds was a problem as he was getting out of hand. He had then suggested adoption of the policy of the Union Miniere, viz. the employment of juveniles first as half-timers in the afternoons (the mornings being spent by them in school) and later as full-timers on surface work. Now that compulsory education between 12 and 16 had been introduced, this method might be applied with advantage.

Mr. Pope said that it is Government policy to encourage families to return to their rural homes and this is the practice of the people. Consequently comparatively few juveniles remained on the Copperbelt, but came later to work on the mines. He thought, however, that the suggestion was worth consideration in respect of those who remain.

Training of European Supervisors.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones described a conversation he had some years ago with the Vice-President of the United States Steel Corporation in which he had been told that the Corporation had found it paid well to train foremen in methods of handling men - especially negroes, Eastern Europeans and Mexicans. He suggested that special attention be given to problems of personnel management and the advantages to special training for personnel management.

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