

SOVIET REPLY TO CRITICISMS

WORLD STAGE by Spectorator

DESPITE the violations committed under Stalin, the Soviet Union was—and is—a genuinely democratic country with full power in the hands of the people, the Soviet Communist Party declared in a 10,000-word analysis published in Pravda last week.

It called on Soviet Communists to see that the principles of Soviet socialist democracy laid down in the constitution of 1936 are fully restored and that violations of Soviet law are completely corrected. In the period of capitalist encirclement which existed before the war, intensified by the advent of fascism in Germany, says the statement, the Soviet Union "had to accept some limitations of democracy . . . but even at that time the Party and the people regarded these limitations as temporary."

Vital Questions Answered

Two vital questions are asked and answered:

How was it possible for the Stalin cult with all its terrible consequences to appear at all under the conditions of a Soviet Socialist system?

And why did not the present leadership of the Soviet Communist Party come out openly against Stalin at the time and remove him from leadership?

While welcoming the rebuff given by foreign progressives to the enemies of socialism, the statement comments that "some of our friends abroad are still not quite clear on the cult of the individual and its consequences and are sometimes giving incorrect interpretations on some points."

Disagreement With Togliatti

It declares its disagreement with the statement of the general secretary of the Italian Communist Party, Palmiro Togliatti (World Stage, two weeks ago), when he raised the question of whether Soviet society had "not neared 'degeneration.'"

"There are no grounds for raising such a question and this is even less understandable in view of the fact that elsewhere Comrade Togliatti quite correctly says:

"It is necessary to draw the conclusion that the essence of the Socialist system was not lost, just as not a single one of the previous gains and, above all, the support of the system by the masses of the workers, peasants and intellectuals who form Soviet society was not lost."

"This very support shows that, notwithstanding everything, this society has preserved its basic democratic nature."

Making Most Of It

"Why are the enemies of Socialism and Communism making the most of the attacks on the shortcomings about which the central committee of our party told the 20th Congress?" the statement asks.

"To divert the attention of the working-class and its parties from the MAIN issues which were raised at the Congress and which were meant to clear the way to further progress being made in the

cause of peace, socialism and working-class unity," it replies. Since the death of Stalin the party had fought consistently to eliminate the results of the Stalin cult because it "contradicted the very essence of the Socialist system and was becoming a brake on the progress of Soviet democracy and the advance of Soviet society."

In speaking out at the 20th Congress "the central committee realised that the frank admission of the errors made would give rise to certain negative features and excesses which could be used by enemies.

"Evidence Of Strength"

"But the C.P.S.U. has spoken the whole truth, however bitter it might have been.

"The party took this step on its own initiative, being guided by considerations of principle, for it believed that even if its action against the Stalin cult caused some temporary difficulties, it would be of enormous value in the long run from the point of view of the basic interests and ultimate aims of the working class.

"Sure guarantees are thereby created against things like the cult of the individual reappearing in our party or in our country ever again."

How The Cult Arose

From 1917 onwards large numbers of wreckers had been sent into the country by the enemies of socialism. The danger had increased, particularly after the rise of fascism in Germany in 1933 when the threat of a new war became greater.

In this situation iron discipline and vigilance were called for, and this inevitably had an adverse effect on the development of democracy. These limitations were justified and necessary.

"But even at that time the party and the people regarded them as temporary, to be removed as the strength of the Soviet state grew and the forces of democracy and peace developed throughout the world."

Lenin's Criticisms

Stalin had gained great authority and popularity in the fights against the Trotskyists and for the consolidation of Soviet power. As early as 1922 Lenin had pointed to defects in Stalin's character and at the beginning Stalin had paid attention to these criticisms. But later he "came to believe in his own infallibility."

The statement then criticises Stalin's theory according to which the class struggle would grow sharper with the advancement of the Soviet Union to Socialism, and says that this incorrect theory was used to justify gross violations of Socialist law and mass repression.

A special status was created for the security organs, which enjoyed tremendous confidence "because they had rendered undoubted services to the people and the country defending the gains of the revolution."

Then it became possible for Stalin gradually to substitute personal control over the security organs "and the usual exercise of judicial standards was not infrequently replaced by his individual decision.

"Serious violations of Soviet law were committed and mass repres-

sions carried out, many honest Communist and non-party people were slandered and suffered, although completely innocent."

Stalin's Actions Restricted

It would be wrong to assume that nothing was done to try to halt the disastrous consequences of Stalin's actions, the statement said.

"There were definite periods during the war, for example, when Stalin's individual actions were sharply restricted, when the negative consequences of the lawlessness, arbitrary action, etc., were substantially reduced.

"Members of the central committee, as well as outstanding Soviet military leaders, took control of definite sectors of activity in the rear and at the front, took independent decisions, and by their organisational, political, economic and military work, together with local party and government organisations, secured the victory of the Soviet people in the war."

Why No Open Opposition

In the prevailing conditions these leaders could not, however, come out openly against Stalin and remove him from leadership.

Although Stalin was guilty of many unlawful acts, the Soviet people knew him as a man who always acted in defence of the Soviet Union.

Any opposition to him under these circumstances would not have been understood by the people. It was not at all a matter of personal courage, the statement says.

"It is clear that anyone who in these circumstances would have come out against Stalin, would have got no support from the people.

"What is more, such opposition would have been considered in those circumstances as being against the cause of building socialism and as an extremely dangerous threat to the unity of the party and the whole state in the conditions of capitalist encirclement."

The statement also declares that many of the facts about Stalin's unlawful actions only became known after his death, in connection with the exposure of Beria and his accomplices.

Not Inherent In System

It would be a great mistake to consider that the Stalin cult was something inherent in the nature of the Soviet social system or that the socialist system had in some way changed because of the Stalin cult.

"No cult of the individual could change the nature of the Socialist state which is based on social ownership of the means of production, the alliance of the working class and the peasantry and friendship between the peoples" through this cult did cause serious harm to the development of Socialist democracy and the promotion of the creative initiative of millions of people.

"The supreme aim and daily endeavour of the Soviet state is the utmost advancement of the living standards of the population, ensuring peaceful existence for its people."

THE DEAD MAN HAD NO PASS

JOHANNESBURG.

A green flying squad car lurched to a sudden halt outside a nearly completed 11-storey building in Hillbrow. Before the dust had settled, its doors had opened, disgorging its uniformed African and European policemen.

The concrete mixer stopped its grating song. Tools were laid down.

Reluctantly, resentfully, the workers on the building stood around and one by one they produced their passes.

All the workers, that is, except one.

He slipped away and disappeared from view. But a policeman saw him, and followed.

Two minutes later the people below saw him lying on a ledge on the top floor.

A barrage of abuse commanded him to come down.

The squad car's hooter bellowed its impatience.

With a slight, nervous movement, the worker rolled over and dropped ten stories.

He fell like a bag of concrete, and landed on his face on the pavement. He made no sound, apart from the dull thud of his contact with the ground.

They picked up the body. It was still.

Then the gears scraped. And with a roar the green flying squad car lurched away from that nearly completed 11-storey flat building in Hillbrow.

Some say the dead man had family trouble. Others, that he was in financial difficulty.

And that he had no pass.

C.B.

ALEXANDRA — WHERE THE PASS LAWS BREED MURDER

By RUTH FIRST

THE youngsters stood on the street corner in an untidy, shabby huddle. They were intent on the throw of the dice and seemed to see nothing else around them. Some looked no more than 17 or 18 years old, a few even younger.

"Tsotsis?" Most likely, for Alexandra Township swarms with young Africans whose dead-end future has swept them into petty gangsterism.

THERE CAN BE FEW PLACES WHERE THE PASS LAWS AND CRIME HAVE SUCH A STARK CAUSE-AND-EFFECT CONNECTION.

It's really very simple to see—and quite frightening.

Alexandra is the township thrust upon its own desperate devices.

Men needing to work must run the gauntlet of township control as well as Johannesburg influx control regulations. Township men find jobs in Johannesburg—good jobs—only to be refused registration and told Johannesburg jobs are for Johannesburg Africans. They are directed to find work in Alexandra Township, nine miles from Johannesburg's centre.

But the township has only a sprinkling of small factories and barely any other openings, for though the pass law regulations may say it is a separate local authority for employment purposes, everyone knows that Alexandra grew up to house Johannesburg's workers.

Uglier Each Year

Each year the picture gets uglier: new batches of school leavers strike out to find their first

Polish Pen-Friend

I live in Krakow, Poland, am 27 years old. I work in a state 'company' and study in the university. I would like to correspond with young men and women living in South Africa, but I have not any addresses of them. Can you help me to make pen-friends?

R. KACZYNSKI

Florińska 20/6,
Kraków,
POLAND.

SAR Facilities Inadequate

JOHANNESBURG.

The African National Congress on July 1, 1956, convened a well-attended public meeting at Mzimhlophe (Orlando West). Speakers viewed with alarm the oppressive laws imposed on the people by the authorities.

The SAR system was condemned as inadequate, and the proposal that new passenger coaches without seats be put into use was rejected. How could old people and expectant mothers be expected to endure the long journey to and from town by having to stand all the way in these crowded trains? The meeting felt this would not ease the congestion in trains. The complaint was also made that the time-table was in a completely chaotic state.

The issuing of passes to African women was unanimously condemned. Various oppressive laws were discussed such as the I.C. Act and the Prohibition of Interdicts Act, and finally the Minister of Justice was called upon to withdraw his uncalled for threat of persecuting 200 people for alleged subversive movements.

Benoni Meeting

JOHANNESBURG.

Three hundred people of all races attended a meeting called by the South African Coloured People's Organisation held on the Indian Sports Ground in Benoni. The meeting discussed the pass laws, the permit system, housing and preparations for the women's march to the Union Buildings in August.

The speakers were from the Transvaal Consultative Committee of the five congresses.

KIMBERLEY PROTEST AGAINST PASSES FOR WOMEN

KIMBERLEY.

Over 300 African women demonstrated outside the local Native Commissioner's Office, in protest against the threat to introduce passes for African women.

The demonstrators who were led by Mrs. A. E. Letele, Mrs. Louw and Mrs. Mosala of the African National Congress Women's League, presented a memorandum to the Native Commissioner declaring the reason for the widespread protests against what they termed "this pernicious measure."

All sections at Hextex deeply feel the sad loss, because we have no one to replace him. Ever since our union was formed in Worcester, he has been of great help to us. For the last nine years, he was a shop steward. He gave of his best to the workers, forgetting his own personal needs.

As branch secretary of the Textile Union, I have no words to say how deeply I was struck by the sad news when I was told in hospital that my right hand had passed away.



In Memory of Joe Ndamoyi

We, the workers of the Hex River Textile Mills, sincerely wish to sympathise with the family of our late beloved Comrade Joe Ndamoyi, who had always proved to be a staunch leader to all workers in the textile industry, irrespective of race.

All sections at Hextex deeply feel the sad loss, because we have no one to replace him. Ever since our union was formed in Worcester, he has been of great help to us. For the last nine years, he was a shop steward. He gave of his best to the workers, forgetting his own personal needs.

As branch secretary of the Textile Union, I have no words to say how deeply I was struck by the sad news when I was told in hospital that my right hand had passed away.

W. MANGALIE
for all the workers at Hextex,
Worcester.

FREEDOM DAY IN KIMBERLEY

KIMBERLEY.

What would otherwise have been a very big meeting on the evening of June 26, failed to come off because the local Native Commissioner refused permission. Kimberley and Port Elizabeth are the only two cities where it is illegal for a gathering of more than ten Africans to take place without the permission of the Native Commissioner. All ANC gatherings have hitherto been possible only after the approval of the Commissioner.

After the crowds had returned home, they gathered in groups of ten; with bowed heads, and holding lighted candles in their hands, they prayed and reiterated their firm support of the Freedom Charter whose anniversary they were celebrating. The guest speaker, Mrs. Mohlakoa of Bloemfontein, told them that no amount of banning could ever extinguish the flame of hope for ultimate freedom, once it glowed in the heart of every African.

Coloureds And Indians Arrested In Location

Apartheid is being applied in Third Street, Benoni Location. Coloureds and Indians are arrested when walking in this street because only Africans must use it.

The police are not prepared to admit this openly, and yet they arrest Coloureds and Indians who walk in this street. This happens nearly every week-end.

One Friday, Coloured workers coming from work at 4.30 p.m. walked through Wattville location. For the last two years these workers have walked through Wattville location and were never molested by the police nor did they have any trouble. But all of a sudden they are arrested for permits. The workers told the police that they had applied for permits and the Superintendent had said that it would only be a

waste of time, as they (the workers) were Benoni subjects. So they thought there was nothing wrong in walking through the location.

Before the police (Municipal African) took the workers to the police station, the police suggested that the girls should go with them into a house where they would be fined £2 each. The girls refused. And so they were taken to the police station where they were asked to pay an admission of guilt. The workers refused to pay. They were not locked up, but were told to see a Town Council policeman, on Sunday. On Sunday they went to see this policeman, who said to them, "Ek dink julle is 'n klomp mooli meide, maar julle is donners lelike." And he told the girls to appear in court the next day.

In court they were acquitted. Mr. L. Baker appeared for all the accused.

MRS. M. MOODLEY

Benoni.

Discipline The Africanists

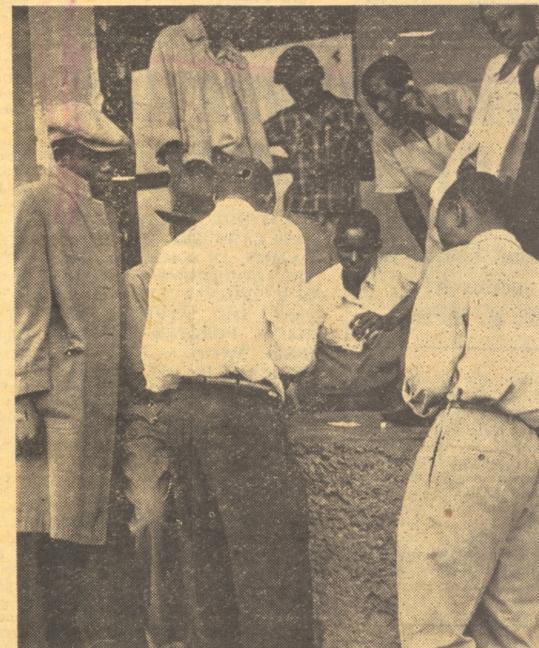
We want to warn all Africans, the country and the world, against some Africans who profess to be members of the ANC and yet their preaching is contrary to the accepted policy of the African National Congress. They preach racial exclusiveness for the Africans; and thus agree with the Nationalist Government.

These people accept removals to site and service schemes called the emergency camps or rather concentration camps; accept passes for African women and are against the Freedom Charter.

The Charter is accepted by the ANC which opposes the removal schemes and rejects passes for any racial group.

We appeal to the ANC powers that be, both Provincial and National, to take the appropriate steps to discipline such people.

All national groups shall have equal rights.
ZOLLIE Z. MALINDI
Secretary ANC (Athlone Branch).



recruits are put through a training course in a house in the township known as the "Rough House." The Spoilers ride in cars. They "dress like Oppenheimers" one man said. Their game is the protection racket, well-planned robberies, house and safe-breaking, the liquor racket. (There is the time they tell of in the township when whiskey was going at 15s. a bottle after a big whiskey haul.)

The gang operates Chicago-style. The protection racket was carried not only into the taxi ranks (each taxi operating on the route was levied so much each week) but among the passengers who use the taxis.

Unchallenged By Law

The gang makes little attempt to work under cover. Assaults and robberies are carried out in broad daylight. The names of the leading gangsters are known by most in the Township, yet the criminals go free for the most part, quite unchallenged by the law. People have become afraid to report crimes to the police: there are the cases where charges were laid and yet no prosecutions followed. There are the instances where the gang members took reprisals against those who reported them to the police.

This is the township where some years ago the people were driven to organise their own Civic Guard to protect them from the gangs. Crime figures dropped impressively: even the police admitted that. Then the Government banned the Civic Guard organisations in Alexandra and everywhere.

The people are not only the victims of persistent attempts on their lives and property, but they are paralysed, by the law, to do the thing that must best counter the work of the gangs. So the robberies become more frequent and the gangsters bolder and more brazen and the crime wave in Johannesburg's suburbs that the daily press is daily so shrill about, is slight compared to the terror of the gangs in the African areas.

decent youngster into a petty criminal. Unemployment and desperation at the futility of trying to wriggle through the pass law maze do the trick in a jiffy.

BUT THE SMALL GANGS THAT PLAGUE THE TOWNSHIP ARE LITTLE IN COMPARISON WITH THE TERROR SOWN BY ALEXANDRA'S BIG TIME GANG — THE SPOILERS.

This gang runs like a machine. Its membership is said to be a few hundred by now and its freshest

YOU SHOULD REPEAL OF GHETTO ACT

—Indian Congress Tells Ghetto Board!

JOHANNESBURG.—The Indian people cannot co-operate in a scheme designed to eliminate them, said Mr. Nana Sita when he appeared before the Group Areas Board in Pretoria last week.

Mr. Nana Sita's attack on the Group Areas Act, apartheid and the Government's anti-Indian policy was met by interjections by the Board Chairman to "Stop that!"

Indians are opposed to the removal of any group, whether White or Non-White, from their present sites, said Mr. Nana Sita.

HARMONIOUS

Indians have lived in Pretoria for 75 years and during this time their relations with other sections of the population have been harmonious. The Indian population is only 1 per cent of the total population of the Transvaal and the fact that this small community has not been ousted is proof that Europeans in general are not a party to the violent anti-Indian outbursts which

have characterised South African politics.

Mr. Nana Sita concluded that the Act, by branding Asiatics inferior, was a calculated affront to the peoples of China, India and Pakistan and could endanger the peace of the world.

Mr. A. Gani represented the Transvaal Indian Congress before the Board.

Only if a case had been made out for the desirability of Group Areas should the Board recommend their establishment, he said.

"No such case has been put, and the City Council is itself not convinced of the practicability of the scheme. For real security for all the people the Board should recommend the repeal of the Group Areas Act."

SHORT STORY COMPETITION

You have only TWO MORE WEEKS to submit your entries in the

NEW AGE SHORT STORY COMPETITION

THE CLOSING DATE IS JULY 31

Don't delay any longer! Send your story in as soon as possible! All stories should be written in English and should be between 2,000 and 3,000 words long, with a South African background.

1st PRIZE — £10

2nd PRIZE — £7 10s.

3rd PRIZE — £5

THE PASS IS THE FOUNDATION STONE OF OPPRESSION

THE old Government pass office in Ferreirastown is no longer for business with Africans alone. In Room 47 Africans are dealt with: Sophiatown residents, debased, humiliated and insulted. Men and women, boys and girls are asked which Chinese shop in Sophiatown is the biggest; how many Dutch Reformed Churches there are; the tribe of Dr. Nyembezi. Pity the man or woman who says he is a Sophiatown resident yet does not know the answer to these and similar questions.

Meanwhile in Room 49, two doors up the passage, a string of Coloured people enter and crowd the room. But in a few minutes they might walk out no longer Coloureds as they know themselves to be, but Africans, "re-classified." For this is where the Race Appeal Board sits in Johannesburg. Now they will have to carry reference books. They know they are Coloureds but the law of the country says they are not. Where do human beings get the power to re-classify other human beings?

In Rooms 50, 51, 52 and 53 Africans are being told they are "foreign Natives." They are deported. Some are sent to the mines, others to farms.

If they come back one day they will say they worked for next to nothing; they were clad in sacks; locked into compounds. They will say they were sjambokked. Some will say they fed on mealie stalks. But what crime did they commit?

From Outside One Cannot See

There is a new municipal pass office in Johannesburg in Albert Street. This is the centre of Johannesburg's own pass empire. This new building is huge. From the outside one cannot see queues and it might seem empty. But inside the walls is so much that cannot be seen from the street. And there are the long queues, every day.

There are about 16 counters, each for a different purpose (influx, registration and so on) and here men spend the whole day, and then leave towards evening without having been attended to.

The pass works in many different ways. It is known as a "permit" when the African enters a location; as a special pass when an African seeks work; as a night pass when an African moves about in the night.

What happens when a man has a pass and wants to leave one province to visit relatives in another? First, his relatives must get him a permit from their location superintendent. Forms must be filled in. If permission is granted, the visitor's pass book number must be entered, and the forms sent to his home pass office. Then the man can start on his journey to visit his relatives for a

The final sketch in a series by M. K. MPHU

specified time. But he must report to the pass office on arrival.

There was the case of a man permitted to leave Cape Town for the Transvaal to visit relatives, but when he got to Johannesburg all his papers were ignored and he was told to leave the Union. He spent a day at the pass office and left at 5.15 p.m.—declared a "foreign Native." This was despite the written permission of the superintendent from his home location.

It Was Said . . .

It was said when pass books were introduced that African men would leave and enter any province or town without difficulty, and need only report to the location superintendent within 72 hours. But men are arrested when they have been in a township for only a few hours; and visiting friends carries the penalty of prison; and men have to report immediately, to be on the safe side, even before they enter a province, or location or town.

What happens when a municipal official or clerk takes a dislike to you? A man was once refused a permit because he entered the municipal office with his hat on. It was in the night and there was no transport back to the town. The man gave the African clerk his name and the number of the house where he was going to sleep and he entered the location. The next morning he was arrested for entering without a permit.

Is this all one can say about these pass laws?

Anything can happen under the pass laws.

Such Are The Laws

A man may serve a firm for 20 or 30 years and then be told to go back to where his ancestors were born, in Nyasaland or Bechuanaland. Or he may be ordered to the mines or farms, an old man who has worked long years. Some men are told they will be sent to work in factories just outside the city and they find themselves on farms. Men will have their pass books endorsed out of the city and then a new nightmare starts. Men will be arrested as they leave the jails in which they have just served sentences under the pass laws.

Meanwhile their families are going from pass office to pass office, from one police station to the next; from jail to hospital and then to the mortuaries—in vain.

IS IT NOT TRUE THAT THE PASS LAWS ARE THE FOUNDATION IN FACT OF ALL THE OPPRESSIVE LAWS OF OUR COUNTRY? WITH A PASS THE AFRICAN REMAINS FOREVER A JAIL-GOER. WITH A PASS THE AFRICAN IS TO REMAIN FOREVER A "BOY." SUCH ARE THE LAWS OF OUR COUNTRY THAT AFRICANS MUST "RESPECT" AND "OBEY!"

4,500 May Be Denied A Hearing

(Continued from page 1)

legal representations before the Board on August 2 on why they wish to be heard—but even then there is no guarantee that the Board will decide to hear them.

ON PRINCIPLE

New Age telephoned Mr. Prins, secretary of the Cape Western Committee of the Board, for clarification on the question of the 4,500.

"All these people objected in principle to the Group Areas Act," said Mr. Prins. "We can't take that into consideration. The Act is there and the Committee is there to make recommendations on it. The Committee has its terms of reference. The Committee will only ask those to give evidence where it thinks it necessary and where it thinks that the person or organisation has something more to add.

"The Committee can't sit in Cape Town from August of this year to August of next," Mr. Prins added. (The sittings have been scheduled to last from August 2 to August 24.)

S.A.C.P.O. PROTEST

"The decision of the Group Areas Board not to invite the 4,500 residents of the Southern Suburbs to give evidence before it is a vicious flouting of the right of the people to raise their voices in defence of their homes," Mr. A. la Guma, chairman of the S.A. Coloured People's Organisation, said in a statement to New Age.

"It is clear that the authorities are not concerned with the widespread condemnation of the Group Areas Act, and are prepared to operate its pernicious machinery in the face of mounting opposition."

Calling upon the people of the Southern suburbs to prepare to defend their homes by every possible means, S.A.C.P.O. states that meetings in preparation for a mass demonstration will be held throughout the suburbs. "No one who values home, security and freedom should fail to enter into the struggle against the impending danger," says S.A.C.P.O.

LAW AND THE LAYMAN

By JURIST

THE RIGHT TO STRIKE

Like so many other rights, the right of a South African worker to strike depends on the colour of his skin.

The rights of European, Coloured and Asiatic workers are governed by the Industrial Conciliation Act. This Act allows the right to strike, though subject to certain limitations. The main limitations are as follows:

1. Workers in essential services, such as water, light and public transport undertakings, must refer their disputes to arbitration and are not allowed to strike.

2. Workers may not strike over a question which is directly covered by a valid industrial agreement or Wage Board determination. Thus, for instance, if an agreement has been negotiated covering wages, there can be no strikes about wages until the agreement expires. If a dispute arises on some subject with which the agreement does not deal, however, the existence of the agreement will not prevent a strike.

3. When a dispute arises on a point not covered by any agreement, the workers must first refer the dispute to the industrial council, if there is one, or in the absence of an industrial council they must apply to the Minister of labour for a conciliation board. A period of 30 days must then be allowed for these measures to take effect. If at the end of 30 days the industrial council or conciliation board has failed to consider the matter, or if no conciliation board has been appointed, or if negotiations have taken place but have failed, the workers are free to strike.

4. No trade union may instigate or organise a strike unless strike action has been approved by a majority of the members concerned, in a secret ballot.

INDUSTRIAL COUNCILS

Industrial councils and conciliation boards consist of representatives of both employers and employees. Their function is to hear both sides of any dispute which arises and to endeavour to reach an agreement. If an agreement is reached, it may with the approval of the Minister of Labour be declared binding on those employers and employees who are parties to it, or on the industry as a whole. The agreement then has the force of law, and any employer who fails to abide by its terms can be prosecuted.

AFRICAN WORKERS

Although African workers are excluded from the operation of the Industrial Conciliation Act and can have no representation on an industrial council or conciliation board, their conditions of work may nevertheless be dealt with by an industrial agreement. A mixed trade union may therefore negotiate on behalf of its African members, provided that it does so in the course of negotiations involving its European members as well. An exclusively European trade union may also put forward demands relating to the conditions of work of Africans in its industry. Though African workers have often benefited from this position, it is hardly necessary to point out the injustices which might result from the determination of African working conditions by bodies on which the Africans have no vote.

The Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act governs the questions of strikes and industrial disputes involving Africans. The Act contains a total prohibition on strikes. No matter how strong the grievances of African workers may be, and no matter what efforts may have been made to settle the dispute, it is a criminal offence for the workers to strike. The maximum penalty is a fine of fifty pounds or six months imprisonment.

NOT ALL STRIKES

A strike requires the participation of more than one person,

according to the definition in the Act. A refusal to work by a single person does not amount to a strike. Nor does it amount to a strike if workers simply refuse to do something which, according to their contracts or an industrial agreement, they are not obliged to do. For instance, if workers are entitled to knock off at 4 p.m. and their employer tells them to remain at work until 5, they would not be striking if they ignored his order and stopped at 4. Similarly, it would not be a strike if workers refused to enter a workshop in which safety measures required by law had not been adopted.

A "go-slow" movement, if organised for the purpose of enforcing demands, is a strike in terms of the Act. And, though an individual worker may be perfectly entitled to leave his job on a week's notice, a mass movement to give notice, organised for the purpose of enforcing demands, is a strike.

The Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act provides for the setting up of various bodies, the function of which is to investigate and endeavour to settle labour disputes involving Africans. These are "works committees," consisting of workers in a particular undertaking, elected by the workers; "regional committees" consisting of Africans with a European chairman, all nominated by the Minister, and a "Central Native Labour Board" consisting exclusively of Europeans nominated by the Minister.

THE WAGE BOARD

The theory of the Act is that the existence of a dispute should be reported through the works committee to an inspector, who will, together with the regional committee, endeavour to reach a settlement. If no settlement is reached, the matter is then referred to the Wage Board. This is the only body which has any real powers. It can issue a ruling which the Minister must proclaim and which then becomes binding upon employers.

The Wage Board is a body which has existed for many years for the purpose of determining wages and working conditions in industries which are not governed by industrial councils. It consists of three permanent members nominated by the Governor-General and for the purpose of investigating any particular industry, an additional member may be nominated by the trade union concerned and by the employers' organisation concerned. The trade union representative must be nominated by registered (i.e. European) trade unions, and there is no provision for a representative of African workers on the Wage Board.

TRIAL OF 202 TEXTILE WORKERS

BENONI.

Five court days have been set aside for the hearing of the prosecution of 202 Amato textile workers facing charges of striking illegally on December 6 last year. The case will be heard from August 6 to 10. The magistrate commented at the last court hearing that the factory's production was being dislocated by this long-drawn-out case. The defence is now to call its evidence and Mrs. S. Muller, appearing for the workers, indicated that she might call 80 witnesses from among the accused to give evidence on their behalf.

Originally 365 workers were charged. One hundred and sixty-three have been acquitted.

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