

E.P. 15

SOUTH AFRICAN CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS

COPY OF A LETTER SENT TO THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL,
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION.

The Director-General,
International Labour Organisation,
GENEVA,
SWITZERLAND.

Dear Sir,

We wish to draw your attention to the persecution of Mr. Alven Bennie who is an organiser for the General Workers' Union, Port Elizabeth, a Union affiliated to the South African Congress of Trade Unions.

Mr. Bennie started his trade union career in 1954 when he became a shop steward in a commercial distributive firm; he was also one of the leading members of the Distributive and Commercial Workers' Union.

In 1958 he was charged with incitement in connection with the Stay-at-Home, but was found not guilty and acquitted.

In 1961 he was arrested while addressing the workers of the Bay Transport Company in Port Elizabeth, who were involved in a dispute with their employers, and was charged with trespass but was again found not guilty and acquitted.

Early this year he was arrested while distributing leaflets to Railway workers and was fined R6.00, (£3).

He has now been served with the following orders by the Minister of Justice: (The orders are dated 4th October, 1962)

1. He has been confined to the magisterial district of Port Elizabeth for 5 years;
2. He has to report to the officer in charge of the New Brighton (an African township near Port Elizabeth) Police Station every day at 7 a.m. for 5 years;
3. He is prohibited for 5 years from attending within the Republic of South Africa:
 - " (i) any social gathering, that is to say, any gathering at which the persons present also have social intercourse with one another.
 - (ii) any political gathering, that is to say, any gathering at which any form of State or any principle or policy of the Government or State is propagated, defended, attacked, criticised or discussed."

We would be grateful if you would lodge a complaint, on Mr. Bennie's behalf, against this victimisation and flagrant disregard for civil and trade union rights to the Committee for Freedom of Association.

You will note from the brief outline of Mr. Bennie's trade union record that the only conviction he has against him is that of trespass and this is part of a determined campaign on the part of the authorities to prevent railway workers from becoming organised into the South African Railways & Harbours Workers' Union.

Copy of letter to the Director-General, ILO (contd)

You will note that Mr. Bennie has been given no reasons for the orders and that he has had no opportunity to defend himself.

The results of the orders will be that Mr. Bennie will not be able to interview, address or help workers and that the orders will, therefore, vitually put an end to his trade union work.

With thanks,

Yours faithfully,

P. M. Altman
(MRS.) P.M. ALTMAN
ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY.

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FEDERATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN 1954-1963

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