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R E P O R T

October 1940 - June 1941

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F R I E N D S O F A F R I C A

SOUTHERN AFRICAN OFFICE - 17, EXPLORATION BUILDINGS,
JOHANNESBURG.

R E P O R T

OCTOBER, 1940 - JUNE, 1941.

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It has been the policy of this office to make a periodical survey of the progress of industrial organisation among African Native and other non-European workers in South Africa. The time seems now ripe for another such survey. In the circumstances, it is proposed to preface the usual review of the industrial, co-operative and general activities of this office since the issue of the last report, by a survey of the present African trade union position.

This survey will cover only the field of the African workers engaged in secondary industry; that is, although reference will be made to the organisation of railway workers it will not deal in general with workers employed by the Government or the Municipalities, nor in the Johannesburg area, with the 350,000 indentured workers employed by the gold mines.

Difficulties of organising African Industrial Workers.

The difficulties in the path of the organiser of African industrial workers, even in a great industrial centre such as Johannesburg has become, have always been and still are immense. These difficulties arise not merely from the inexperience and the still largely vagrant character of the workers concerned, this latter being a characteristic which the country's segregation policy tends to perpetuate; they are due primarily (i) to the multiplicity of laws and regulations, particularly the Pass Laws and regulations under the Urban Areas Acts, which still shackle the movement of African workers and prevent them selling their labour in the best market; (ii) the explicit exclusion of Africans from the privileges and rights of organisation and collective bargaining secured to Europeans under the terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act: and (iii) the continued existence of penal sanctions for most African contracts of labour which deprive the African worker of the use of the strike weapon, even while his exclusion under the Industrial Conciliation Act denies him the use of constitutional channels for the redress of his industrial grievances. Before proceeding to review the extent to which the African trade union movement has developed in spite of all these handicaps, a few words will be said about each of these hurdles which the movement has to surmount.

Pass Laws.

Most of the organisations with which the present survey will deal consist of African "pass-bearing" Natives, i.e. workers subject to Pass Laws. These laws render Africans liable to arrest at any hour of the day or night for failure to produce on demand by the police any one of a number of documents, e.g. the receipt for the payment of the annual Poll Tax, a Native Service Contract or "monthly pass", which must be franked by the employer each month with a 2/- revenue stamp, or a "special pass" from his employer authorising him to be away from the premises on which he works; a "night special" if he is abroad between the curfew hour and 4 a.m., or a "travelling pass" which authorises his movement if he is not actually in employment. Exemption from the obligation to produce any of these "passes" is now being granted on an increasingly liberal scale by the Department of Native Affairs, but the exemption is itself only another "pass", failure to produce which has the same

result as failure to produce any of the documents which it exempts the owner from carrying, namely arrest.

It will easily be understood that these restrictions on the movement of African workers interfere seriously with the work of effective organisation since they complicate the mere meeting together of workers which is essential to such organisation. The whole pass system also gives rise to some very curious anomalies in an industrialised society as the following incident will show. Recently the African secretary of an African trade union in the Johannesburg area was arrested for failure to produce a "Night Special" pass. But the only people who could give him such a document were his employers, the "pass-bearing" members of his union. The grant of an exemption by the Native Affairs Department could alone remove this anomaly, but the man in question has not attained the educational qualification which the Department demands as a basic condition of such exemption. He was, therefore, lodged in gaol for the night and, on being brought before the Magistrate the next day, was sentenced to a fine of 10/- or seven days' imprisonment for not being in possession of a duly authorised Night Special Pass. This trade union secretary and organiser continues his work in constant danger of arrest if he is abroad after the curfew hour.

Another illuminating case, also from the Johannesburg area, which still further illustrates the difficulties of organisation of Africans by Africans is that of an African trade union organiser who, two years ago, was arrested in the very midst of a strike of members of this organisation, for failure to produce the receipt for his Poll Tax for that year. This incident arose in the course of a strike of cement and building construction workers in the negotiations upon which this office was called in. The police were early on the scene and the arrest of the organiser for failure to produce his tax receipt was part of the tactics employed by them in their handling of the situation. The man concerned was detained in custody for 24 hours, was then tried and found guilty of not having paid his tax, whereupon he was fined for his failure to pay the tax and detained in gaol until the tax was paid.

This case shows not only the difficulties in the way of African industrial organisation but also some of the less conspicuous but extremely dangerous pitfalls that beset the path of African workers and their organisers in periods of industrial strife.

Urban Areas Acts.

The Native (Urban Areas) Acts also play their part in complicating the work of African trade union organising. Under these Acts, the entry of Africans into urban areas is rigidly controlled and their expulsion from these areas one of the possible penalties of failure to remain in work or to stick to a job, even when it is an unsatisfactory one. Indeed, under the recent amendment of these Acts embodied in the Native Laws Amendment Act, the control of African workers by the Government has been greatly strengthened. The principle of the Pass Laws has been extended even to the Cape Province (where, however, the curfew already existed) through the provision for regulations imposing the Native Service Contract upon all urban centres, while powers are being given under the Act to the police and Municipal authorities in specified urban areas to enter any premises and search without warrant "upon being satisfied that there is reason to suspect that any Native is residing or is being employed or accommodated in contravention of the provisions of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act 1923 as amended or by any regulations framed thereunder". Further, as will appear later, these Acts have come dangerously to reinforce the Masters & Servants Acts and the burden which penal sanctions already impose upon African workers.

The Conciliation and Wage Acts.

When the organiser of African trade unions has surmounted the obstacles in the way of his occupation which these laws create, he is still faced with the obstructions and discouragement created by the terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act. Under these terms, African trade unions, although not illegal associations, are unrecognised associations; that is, they have none of the powers and rights of negotiation secured to and indeed imposed upon European trade unions under the Act. Hence employers need not consider or negotiate with them even if that be the only way to prevent a stoppage of work - a situation the implications and dangers of which were revealed in the strike of coal delivery workers in Johannesburg, report of which is given below. But, although African workers are thus denied the rights of organisation, the employers and the "recognised" employees may, without consulting them lay down wage and other conditions of employment for them and deductions may be and are made from their wages to meet the costs of maintaining the Industrial Council on which they are not represented and which may act, as is not unknown to happen, against the interests of the African workers in the industry concerned. The difficulty of a trade union justifying its existence to its members in such circumstances can easily be imagined.

When the first Industrial Conciliation Act was passed in 1925, while Africans were excluded from the definition of employees, the Industrial Councils consisting of organised employers and employees which were to govern industry under the Act were not given power to regulate African conditions of employment. The logic of this situation was, however, immediately countered by the tendency of the employers to use African workers outside the scope of the Act, thus undermining the position of European workers whose conditions of service they could not reduce except by agreement. The Act was consequently amended to enable the Minister to declare any agreement reached between European employers and employees as valid over the whole field of labour employed in the industry. This stopped the gap in the original position but created the anomaly, which persists in the present law, that the African is not an employee for purposes of negotiation with, but is an employee for purposes of control by the Industrial Council. The provision of the latest Act (1937) whereby interests otherwise not represented by the two parties on an Industrial Council - organised employers and organised employees other than Africans - may be represented at negotiations for conditions of employment by an official of the Department of Labour does not really rectify the undemocratic character of the general situation.

The Wage Act.

But while the Industrial Conciliation Act repudiates the assumption that African workers are workers and should have the privileges of workers of organising for collective bargaining and representation by their own chosen representatives, under the Wage Act, which is also administered by the Department of Labour, a Wage Board is constituted which recognises all sections of workers other than those employed as indentured labourers or in farming or agricultural pursuits or in government service. It receives requests from any and all interested parties for investigations of and recommendations in respect of any trade or industry in which an Industrial Council does not function and, on the instruction of the Minister, after enquiry, is empowered to make recommendations in respect of the trade or industry concerned provided those recommendations shall not differentiate on grounds of race or colour. Further, invitation is extended through the Government Gazette to any organisation or any interested individual or group of individuals, whether engaged in the industry for which an enquiry has been asked and duly authorised or not, to submit written and oral evidence to the Board in connection with the enquiry. Thus there is created something of an anomaly in an industrial situation. Under the Industrial Conciliation Act, the African worker may not enter the field of collective bargaining, certainly not directly; under the Wage Act he may.

Penal Sanctions.

But whether he may or may not be party to negotiation with his employer in regard to conditions of employment, the African worker is, in the last instance, deprived of the real power of collective bargaining through the continued operation of penal sanctions in respect of his labour contracts. The operation of these sanctions is effectively illustrated by the history of the coal delivery workers strike referred to above and detailed further on in this report. That strike had the further significance of revealing the circumstance that to-day, it is not only the out-moded Masters & Servants Acts which are being invoked to force African employees to accept conditions of employment which they have found bad and been unable to change by constitutional means. The amended Urban Areas Act is being applied to the same purpose, a depressing circumstance when changed and changing conditions, it was hoped, were gradually modifying and changing our legal system. The fact that this Act was never designed for this purpose does not improve the situation although it may mean an earlier amendment than we could otherwise have hoped for now that its dangers begin to be revealed.

The truth of the matter is that the whole position of the African worker under the laws at present in force in this country is shot through with anomalies. The fact is that the African in our cities and towns is to-day an integral part of our industrial machinery upon whose stability and acquired skill our industry is coming more and more to depend. But our laws continue to treat him as a periodic peasant-worker not wanted permanently in the town and incapable of understanding or being controlled by laws evolved explicitly to regulate the sort of relationships between employer and employee which have become both the foundation and the background of his life. In other words our laws, designed in pre-industrial days, have failed to accommodate themselves to changed conditions - a failure undoubtedly largely attributable to the influence of the mining industry, which still subsists on indentured peasant labour subsidised from the land, and to the conservatism of the farming industry. The result of this failure is a serious creaking of the machine which is only prevented from becoming an actual breakdown at the moment by a wise administrative modification of the law in operation, of which the coal delivery workers strike will again serve as illustration.

From the foregoing brief statement, it will be evident that the contention that the difficulties confronting those who set out to organise African workers in South Africa are immense is fully justified. Some explanation will also be derived from the facts set out above of one of the outstanding characteristics of African trade unionism, namely the violent fluctuations in membership of existing organisations, the irregularity of payment of trade union fees reflected in the books of various organisations which show a membership of thousands with only hundred "in compliance" as understood in terms of the rules governing registered trade and industrial unions of workers; and finally the brief life of many of the unions that do struggle into existence.

In view of these established characteristics, it must be understood in regard to the survey of existing unions which follows, that no such survey can be completely comprehensive, nor can it hold good as a reflection of the African trade union position in the area concerned in more than general outline for any time other than that at which it is made, that is, that the outlines of the actual African trade union position are excessively fluid. This is a circumstance which makes such a survey something of an adventure, but it is felt that it is an adventure worth embarking on as providing for those who are interested in but not closely in touch with the progress of the African industrial worker some impression of how he is standing up to and reacting to the changing and extremely exacting conditions of his life.

Survey of African Trade Unions in the Johannesburg Area.

For purposes of this survey, 23 of the 25 organisations listed have been divided into four groups. The basis of the division is the centre round which the Unions in question tend to co-ordinate their activities. The two unions not included in any of these four groups, namely the Liquor and Catering Union and the Domestic Workers' Union will be dealt with separately, while reference will also be made to a passenger and road transport organisation which is not included in the 25 organisations referred to above.

Group A. With headquarters at 8 Kerk Street, Johannesburg.

I.	African Commercial and Distributive Workers	membership claimed	8,500
II.	African General Workers' Union ...	" "	9,500
III.	African Laundry Workers' Union ...	" "	8,500
IV.	African Printing Workers' Union ...	" "	<u>480</u>
	Aggregate membership claimed		<u>26,400</u>

The figures of membership are as given to Mr. Mampuru, African consultant to this office. However, a check has cast doubt on whether there are in fact 8,500 Africans in Johannesburg eligible for membership of a Commercial and Distributive Workers' Union. Further, many of those enrolled in the General Workers' Union are "House Boys" and domestic workers, a considerable number of whom have recently joined the African Domestic Servants League following upon the success of the League in recovering arrears of wages under the provisions of the Wage Determination operative in respect of hotels, boarding houses and flats. The Department of Labour, Johannesburg, estimates that the approximate total number of workers eligible for membership of the African Laundry Workers' Union is not more than 1,700.

Until the middle of last year (1940), the activities of the Unions in this group were directed by a European named Max Gordon. Last year, Mr. Gordon was one of the few South African Nationals to be interned for subversive activities among Natives. It has been claimed that Gordon's internment has weakened the effectiveness of these Unions. It is probable that it has had some effect in that direction, but the prosecution and conduct of the Coal Delivery Workers' strike which was organised by the General Workers' Union suggests that Mr. Kosa, the African directing official of that Union, and the dominant force now in this group of Unions, has succeeded in keeping together the bulk of the workers organised in these Unions. There are, however, several Unions listed under other sections of this survey, such as the Bakers, Chemical Workers & Dairy Workers' Union, that used to accept Max Gordon's direction but have, since his internment, drifted into other affiliations.

Mr. Gordon has now been released from internment and under the terms of his release, must confine his activities to trade union work. As this release has only recently occurred, there is no evidence yet of the effects of his return to the field of African Trade Unionism.

Group B. With headquarters at 5, Kruis Street, Johannesburg.

I.	African Building Workers' Union ..	membership claimed	1,090
II.	African Broom & Brush Workers' Union	" "	100
III.	African Clothing Workers' Union ..	" "	500
IV.	African Cycle Workers' Union ...	" "	120
V.	African Iron & Steel Workers' Union	" "	2,390

VI. Rope and Canvas	Forward	4,200
VI. African Rope and Canvas Workers' Union membership claimed		70
VII. African Skin & Hide Workers' Union.	" "	70
VIII. African Sweet Workers' Union..	" "	120
IX. African Textile Workers' Union	" "	100
Total membership claimed ...		<u>4,562</u>

The African Building Workers' Union which, a few years ago when a struggle was being put up for improved conditions of employment for Africans in the building trades, promised to become a strong and important Union, is at present in a state of acute internal dissension owing to differences between the organiser, who has resigned his post, and an official of a co-ordinating committee operating in respect of several of the Unions in this group.

The African Clothing Workers' Union is a parallel organisation to the militant South African Garment Workers' Union. This latter Union, which consists predominantly of Afrikaans women workers under the able secretaryship of Mr. E. S. Sachs, has helped to form the African Clothing Workers' Union, encourages its activities and helps to maintain it. In their negotiations for improved conditions of employment, increasingly its officials draw in the African Union.

The Garment Workers' Union and their officials are the spear-head of a move for the establishment of the Industrial Union as distinct from the Craft Union as the dominant group in South African industrial affairs on the workers' side.

South African Iron & Steel Workers' Union.

Few workers engaged in heavy manual labour are paid less than the labouring and semi-skilled African workers in the Iron & Steel Trades. The African workers organisation in these trades is, however, handicapped by the fact that the industry is governed by an Industrial Council in whose deliberations it is not allowed to take part. The consequence of this absence of representation of the African workers would appear to be that the interests of these workers are regarded as of very secondary importance beside those of the employers and the European employees. Proof of this may be found in the terms of the agreement for the trade where it covers a wide variety of operations in which the African worker finds a place, for example:-

"(J) General Labourer (Adults):

- (a) Those who are provided with board and lodging subject to section 4, sub-section (6) hereof ... 4½d per hr
- (b) All others, including those who are provided by their employers with lodging only, subject to section 4, sub-section (6) hereof:-

First six months of currency of Agreement ...	4½d.	"	"
Second " " " " " " ...	4¾d	"	"
Second year of Agreement	5d.	"	"

Note: Sub-Section (6) reads:-

"No employee shall be required as part of his contract of service to board or lodge with his employer or to purchase any goods or hire any property from his employer. An

employee who agrees to accept board or lodging or both from his employer shall not be required or allowed to pay per week more than six shillings for board and lodging or three shillings and sixpence for board only or two shillings and sixpence for lodging only, provided such lodging has been approved by the Council and local authorities concerned".

In operation this means that General Labourers in category (a) earned 18/- at a rate of 4¹/₂d. per hour for a 48 hour week, from which the employer deducted 6/- for board and lodging, while those in category (b) earned, according to length of service, 18/-, 19/- and 20/- respectively and might be given lodging at their employer's expense, but have to provide their own food no matter where they are employed. It is one of the worst agreements ever framed and a disgrace to the European trade unionists who signed it. A modification which came into operation in May 1940, specifies 2 grades of labour, (a) as mentioned above at 4⁵/₄d. per hour - 48 hour week, 19/-, and (b) 5¹/₄d. per hour - 48 hour week, 21/-.

It remains to be added that the Union asserts that the employers interpret "Adult" as a person over 21 years of age, whereas a Native male in South Africa is liable to pay Poll Tax, £1. per year, at 18 years of age. Those considered as below adult years are paid 1/1d, 1/6d. and 1/8d. per day, rates which have not been fixed by the Council but arbitrarily by the employers.

As the working week is 48 hours, the Union points out that general labourers whose conditions of employment are governed by clause (a) of the agreement referred to above will earn 18/-, from which the employer will deduct 6/- for board and lodging, leaving them with a cash wage of 12/- for a full working week. These workers cannot pass into category (b) and earn 20/- per week unless they at least buy their own food. On the other hand, it is difficult to believe that those in (b) could feed and house themselves for the extra 2/- per week earned, making, with the 6/- that the employer is entitled to deduct, 8/- per week more than the cash wage which those in (a) receive. It is, however, understandable that there are many of these workers who have a family that could not even exist if the maximum 12/- were available through the "head of the house" preferring to be boarded and lodged by his employer.

It is worthy of note further, that although sub-section (6) of the agreement, as quoted above, lays down that no worker shall be required as part of his contract, to board and lodge with his employer, the Union claims to be able to prove (and the employers do not deny that they may be right) that many men do sign contracts under which they agree to accept board and lodging in the belief that they must do so, and then in fact do not use these services but live with their families in neighbouring Municipal locations.

Indeed, conditions in this trade badly need revision, at least in respect of the African workers; but requests for this revision, supported by memoranda which the employers themselves recognise as impressive have so far borne no fruit beyond the appointment by the employers' organisation of a sub-committee to go into the whole matter. The facts of the matter are perfectly plain to the most casual observer - the African workers are grossly underpaid both as ordinary labourers and for the skill which many of them acquire and on which their employers, by their own admission, count. They are paid as single men not as the permanent industrialised labourforce which the industry needs and wants. Yet to the knowledge of this office, the sub-committee referred to above has been investigating the matter for the last six months and more - and the African worker struggles along as best he can, getting more and more discouraged as hope of improvement is deferred. Both Mr. Ballinger and Mrs. Ballinger have been called in at different times by the workers' organisation - as, we believe, have other sympathisers, so far without practical result. Mr. Ballinger is again endeavouring to assist the Union in the matter, and, as this

report is being written, there is information to the effect that an increase of 1d. per hour is to be given to the lower-paid workers in the trade.

Unfortunately, a weakness on the side of the African workers' organisation has provided an excuse for the employers delaying action. This is the existence of two unions both operating in the same field, the African Iron & Steel Workers' Union under consideration here, and the African Metal Workers' Union listed under Group C. below. The employers can and do claim that, in the circumstances, they do not know who are the real representatives of the workers. Attempts to bring the two bodies together had a limited and temporary success earlier in the year, but they have since drifted apart again. If these two Unions could be brought together in an effective amalgamation, the African Confederation of Metal, Iron & Steel Workers which would result might become one of the most powerful organisations of African industrial workers since the Industrial & Commercial Union (I.C.U.) was at its zenith.

African Sweet Workers' Union.

This is another African organisation that is a parallel to a European organisation, the South African Sweet Workers Union. Its relations with its employers have been regulated by a Wage Determination which provided a minimum of 26/- per week for unskilled workers. Some Africans are also employed in semi-skilled occupations in this trade and have drawn up to 35/- per week, while a few who do "sweet boiling" receive 80/- per week. This Determination has recently been revised but the full terms of the revision are not known at the time of the writing of this report.

In this trade, the European workers have insisted on the Africans being organised so that the workers can keep effective control of the trade and the conditions that have been achieved in it.

The African Textile Union is also a parallel Union to a European Union. Both the African Union and the European Union are struggling organisations, while the African Cycle, Rope & Canvas and Skin & Hide Unions are all more or less moribund.

The African Broom and Brush Union is a small Union of the activities of which little is known.

Group C. With headquarters at 12 Kruis Street, Johannesburg.

I.	African Bakers Industrial Union ..	claimed membership	643
II.	African Dairy Workers Union...	" "	700
III.	African Metal Trades Union ...	" "	1,080
IV.	African Mineral Water Workers Union	" "	500
V.	African Tin Workers' Union ..	" "	600
VI.	Brewery Employees' Union (Non-European)...	" "	500
VII.	S.A. Chemical Workers' Union..	" "	1,100
VIII.	Wine & Spirit Trades Union (Non-European) ..	" "	<u>250</u>
	Total claimed membership		<u><u>4,373</u></u>

The Unions in this group under the numerals I, II and VII used to be associated with those in Group A. The African Bakers

are used as a sort of industrial battledore and shuttlecock by the Master Bakers and European Operative Bakers' Union. The Master Bakers would like to make the industry "all white", contending that the conditions under which most Natives in the industrial areas of South Africa live are not conducive to the strict cleanliness and hygiene that should obtain in Bakeries, and that most Europeans would like to know that their bread is handled by European Bakers. On the other hand, an organisation of employers known as the "Price Fixation Association", which is now reported to have merged with the Master Bakers, was in favour of the employment of more Natives and other non-Europeans in baking in grades lower than "first hands". Mrs. Ballinger, Senator Rheinallt Jones and this Office have at intervals during the last few years been called upon to assist in negotiations in this most difficult trade of conflicting employing interests and race prejudices.

African Dairy Workers are a particularly unfortunate section of Native distributive workers. They have been exempted from the cover of Determination 70 - Commercial & Distributive Trades, owing to the alleged difficulty milk distributors have in meeting the competition of "pirate distributors" such as farmers and dairies outside the area of operation of Determination 70. In consequence, whereas Distributive Workers covered by the Determination are guaranteed a minimum of £1. 7. 8. per week, or £6. per month, Native Dairy Workers are paid an average of £4. 10. 0. per month.

The Parliamentary Representatives, the Natives and this Office are continuing efforts to have African Dairy Workers brought within the scope of operation of a Wage Determination similar to "70". As this report is being written there is information to hand that "milk distribution" is to be covered by a special Wage Determination, the terms of which have not yet been published.

The African Mineral Water Workers' Union operates in respect of the African workers in a trade in which the employers in the Johannesburg area desire regulation by an Industrial Council, although employers outside that area prefer regulation by Wage Board Determination. The organisation is not strong, mainly owing, it is said, to the migrant class of labour which the trade employs and to the seasonal fluctuations which characterise the trade.

The Brewery Workers' (Non-European) Union is a lusty infant born last year and progressively making its existence known to the Industrial Council for the Brewery Trade, Witwatersrand, with some advantage to its members. Prior to April of last year, the trade was governed by an Industrial Council agreement in which the Native workers were not explicitly recognised. By implication, however, the majority of these workers were provided for under two grades: that of general assistant with wage rates of £2. 0. 0. per week for adults and £1. 0. 0. per week for juveniles, and that of unskilled labourer (the majority) at a wage of £1. 0. 0. per week. In contrast to these rates, the Brewery Industrial Council for the Cape has laid down a minimum rate of £1. 12. 6. per week for labourers, with a cost-of-living allowance of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., which will probably be increased owing to conditions arising out of the war. Since April of last year, the Witwatersrand Brewery Trade has been operating without an Industrial Council Agreement owing, it is understood, to the refusal of the Minister of Labour to notify a proposed new agreement on the ground that he was not satisfied that the lower paid workers, i.e. the Africans, had been adequately provided for under it. This action on the part of the Minister is in line with representations made to him both by the Union and by this Office that he should exercise the power given to him under paragraph 48 (4) of the Industrial Conciliation Act in this way in this case. Any evidence of an intention on the part of the Industrial Council to modify the terms of its agreement accordingly has, however, been slow to emerge, and although negotiations have

been in progress between the Union and this Office on the one hand and the employers on the other, it is only as this report is being written that some concessions along the line desired have been announced. The Industrial Council has now agreed to an increase in the rates of pay for labourers of $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per hour, or 1/- per week of 48 hours, the reduction of the deduction made for board and lodging by 1/-, i.e. from 5/- to 4/- per week, and the allocation of a cost of living allowance or war bonus of 5/- per week to married men and 2/6d. per week to single men.

Needless to say, the Union is pleased that its negotiations have met with some success, but it is far from satisfied with the extent of the concessions made, being particularly dissatisfied with the discrimination between married and single men in the matter of war allowance. It means, therefore, to maintain its pressure for further improvement to the best of its ability.

Correspondence that has passed between the Department of Labour and this Office acting for and at the request of the Union, reveals some of the more particular obstacles that beset the path of progress of the workers concerned and necessitate constant vigilance. While it is clear that the Department is anxious to improve the wage rates and conditions of employment for the lower-paid workers in the Brewery trade on the Witwatersrand, it was maintained in a letter from the Department in reply to one from this Office, that there is justification for the contention of the Industrial Council for the trade that the Brewery trade's wage rate of £1. per week for labourers, although low and inadequate must be offset by the fact that Breweries give "continuity of employment". It is to be noted that the same argument is not applied in respect of European workers in the trade. Further, the contention put forward both by the Union and by this Office that the minimum wage paid to unskilled workers in the trade in this area should be the same as that obtaining in the Cape and should certainly not be less than that laid down for the Commercial and Distributive trades, name £1. 7. 8. per week, elicited the following statement in reply:-

"The wages of unskilled labour in Port Elizabeth and Cape Town are higher than in the Transvaal due to the influence of the Coloured people upon wage standards. This is true not only of the Brewery Trade but practically every industry in the area in question. The fact that a number of Natives share in these benefits is fortunate for them but cannot be used as an argument for the introduction of the same wage levels in other areas where Coloured persons are not employed to any extent".

It is clear that the official who wrote this letter has not considered the effect of the gold mining industry determining abnormally low rates of wages for unskilled work in the Transvaal and for widening that gap between unskilled and skilled rates of wages which was typical of the old Cape Province and would, but for the mining industry, probably have been characteristic of the whole of the country.

The South African Chemical Workers' Union is an organisation that has recently helped to negotiate a National Wage Board Determination, the full terms of which are not known to this Office at the time of writing this report.

The Union is involved in disputes in regard to lines of demarcation with other organisations whose field of operation overlaps into chemicals. However, it gives promise of becoming a powerful organisation provided it can obtain organisers with intimate knowledge of the ramifications of manufacturing processes in industrial chemicals.

"Wine and Spirits" is another trade into which the Wage Determination for the Commercial & Distributive Trades has introduced an anomaly. Workers engaged in retail distribution in this trade are covered by this determination, but those employed by the wholesale Wine & Spirits Firms are not covered by it although a number of the wholesale firms are also retailers. In consequence, the labourers and semi-skilled workers employed by the wholesale trade are paid less than those who do similar work for the retailers. This has been the cause of much unrest and agitation among the workers employed by the wholesale trade which threatened to develop into strike action. Some of the wholesale firms have recognised the necessity for removing this injustice of the position and have granted increases of from 2/6d. to 3/6d. per week plus a "Christmas bonus", but there remains a wide gap of from 50 to 75 per cent. between the lowest and highest paid of the distributive workers in the wholesale Wine & Spirits trade. There is thus an urgent necessity for removing the anomaly in its entirety by bringing all the lower-paid workers in the trade under one Wage Determination such as that for the Commercial & Distributive Trades. This office is assisting the Union in this matter.

Group D. With headquarters at 74 Polly Street, Johannesburg.

These Unions are really "Non-European" rather than "African" Unions.

- I. Box & Trunk Workers Union ... Claimed membership 120
- II. African Furniture, Bedding & Mattress Workers' Union ... " " 1,200

The Box & Trunk Workers' Union covers the workers in two firms who are interested in the manufacture of the gaily painted plywood boxes with which Mine Native workers provide themselves to transport their curios, knick-knacks and general effects on the conclusion of their period of indenture in the gold mines of the Witwatersrand. The Union claims that the workers in the trade are 100% organised. It has as part-time secretary, a competent Coloured cabinet maker named J. Mackay, and as full-time organiser an efficient African named Simon Dabula who also acts in a similar capacity for the African Furniture Workers' Union.

Prior to their organisation, the workers in this trade were receiving wages, ranging from the exceptionally low level of 7/6d. to £1. 5. 0. per week. Following a stoppage of work and subsequent negotiations for better conditions of employment, a voluntary agreement was entered into between the Union and the employers which led to the fixing of a minimum wage of £1. per week, with provision for increases for degrees of skill in construction and output which would bring earnings up to £3. per week.

Other features of this voluntary agreement between this group of non-European workers and their employers are four days paid holidays per year, consisting of May Day, Good Friday, Christmas Day and "one Jewish holiday". The reason for the latter choice was that the employers close the factories on all Jewish holidays and as the workers cannot afford to be laid off or unemployed, they have chosen a Jewish holiday as one of their paid holidays.

The Trade Union fees of this organisation are fixed on the basis of 6d. per week for those earning £1. 5. 0. per week or less and 9d. for those earning over £1. 5. 0. The fees are deducted by the employer in accordance with a voluntary "stop order" and handed over to the Union. The accumulated funds are disbursed largely as unemployed benefit at the rate of 15/- per week with a maximum of four weeks' benefit. During the last financial year, the Union disbursed £90. in this way.

The Box and Trunk Workers' Union has for two years in succession, 1940 and 1941, chosen Mr. W. G. Ballinger as their representative at the Annual Conference of the South African Trades & Labour Council, the co-ordinating organisation of labour in South Africa.

The African Furniture Workers' Union is really, like the Box & Trunk Workers' Union, a mixed Union of Non-Europeans. It is a parallel Union to a European organisation of furniture workers of whom the majority are Afrikaans speaking South Africans. It also has, as secretary, the Coloured man, J. Mackay, referred to above in connection with the Box & Trunk Workers' Union.

There is an Industrial Council for the furniture trade, to the maintenance of which the members of this Union contribute and on which they are represented by Mackay. Mr. Mackay must be the only Non-European holding such a position in South Africa outside the Cape Province.

The minimum wage for the trade is 2¼/- per week, but there are African Native and other Non-European workers in the trade doing the staining of backs of furniture and bedding and mattress work who receive from £1. 12. 6. to £3. and £4. per week.

Other Organisations of Non-European Workers.

Outside the four groups of Unions listed above, there are three other organisations in the Johannesburg area that call for mention but do not fall into any of these groups. These are organisations of workers in Domestic Service, Liquor and Catering and Passenger and Road Transport.

The African Domestic Servants League is an organisation largely initiated by Mr. Mampuru of this Office who now acts, in an honorary capacity, as its adviser. Since the gazetting on 11th November 1940 of Wage Determination No. 73, Private Hotels, Boarding Houses, Flats and Rooms, the League has become an important organisation, largely engaged in passing to the Department of Labour in Johannesburg complaints of evasion by employers of the provisions of the Determination. These complaints, most of which have been investigated and set out by Mr. Mampuru, have resulted in the payment of arrears of wages which will eventually amount in the aggregate to a considerable sum of money.

Liquor & Catering.

The African Native workers employed in this trade were assisted to organise by the Europeans in the trade who were already organised into what eventually became known as the No. 1 Branch of the Witwatersrand Liquor & Catering Workers Employees' Union. The Coloured and Asiatics in the trade were grouped into a No. 2 Branch, while the Africans were grouped into a No. 3 Branch. The Trade, so far as Europeans are concerned, is difficult to keep organised effectively owing to the diverse origin of its white workers. These difficulties have been accentuated since the outbreak of the war by the internment of many Italian waiters and catering workers. In contrast, the Africans in the Liquor & Catering Trade have remained almost 100 per cent. organised. In addition, their organiser is an able African. These facts have made the Africans conscious that they are, at least numerically, the dominant labour force in the Liquor & Catering Trade, yet they have no decisive voice in the making of agreements covering the trade. As a consequence, what might have been expected to happen has happened. The No. 3 Branch, or African Section, of the Trade has resolved itself into a separate organisation controlled entirely by Africans, their paid officials being a Secretary, a Clerk-Organiser and a woman office assistant.

Quite recently, the African Domestic Servants League and the African Union of Liquor & Catering Workers have agreed to amalgamate. The amalgamated organisations are finding some difficulty in evolving a suitable designation that will be inclusive and yet not cumbersome.

Passenger and Road Transport.

Organisation of African workers in passenger and road transport has received a considerable stimulus from the recent Wage Board inquiry into and Determination in respect of these field of employment. At the moment there are four known organisations of Africans engaged in road transport, two covering the passenger transport between the City and Alexandra Township and the City and Western Township respectively, and two covering the field of goods transport.

The first of these two groups of organisation appear to have the makings of serious trade unions; the latter group seems to be more in the nature of social clubs than industrial organisation, depending for funds to carry on their activities on dances and other functions organised by their officials. It has so far been found impossible to check the figures of the membership of any of the four organisations as supplied to this Office.

African Trade Union Organisations in the Cape Province.

It was hoped to give a survey of the position in regard to the organisation of Non-European workers in the Cape Province in the form of a special report to the Joint Council of Africans & Europeans in Cape Town. Unfortunately the loss of the draft report in the course of an end-of-session move from Cape Town to Johannesburg has delayed this. Here only the main features of the situation will be referred to.

Cape Town.

The progress of trade union organisation among Non-European workers in the Cape Town area is difficult to gauge, information being scanty and often conflicting. The Executive of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions asserts that none of its constituent Unions debars Non-Europeans from membership. This seems to be true in theory but there are reasons for believing that, in practice, very little encouragement is given by the majority of the established Unions to the lower-paid Non-European workers to become members. And, of course, in the Cape Province as elsewhere, the bulk of African workers are not "employees" in the strict sense of the term, being subject to the Urban Areas Acts which is a ground of exclusion from the privileges of employees under the Industrial Conciliation Acts.

There are, however, several strong organisations consisting exclusively of Non-European workers. These are predominantly "Coloured" in composition but African workers are also included in the membership. Probably the most conspicuous of such Unions are two Unions of Non-European railway workers, one of which claims to be the centre of a National Union of Non-European Railway workers about which information was given in the last report from this Office. There are also two fairly strong Unions competing for the control of the Non-European workers engaged in stevedoring. Of these two Unions, one has a membership in which Africans are in the majority.

Generally speaking, however, although Non-Europeans, and particularly Africans, are freer in the Cape Town area than in any other part of South Africa, except possibly Port Elizabeth, industrial organisation among them is not conspicuous; nor, where it exists, does it evidence that vigorous life that characterises the Johannesburg scene. On the other hand, in this area, the spread between the rates of pay of the unskilled and semi-skilled

workers and the artisan class is not so wide as in the Johannesburg, Witwatersrand and other industrial areas of South Africa, nor are unskilled rates so low as elsewhere, so that the pressure is not quite so acute here as elsewhere; although it would be a mistake to suggest that rates of pay for unskilled work are yet on the "living wage" mark.

Port Elizabeth.

In Port Elizabeth, organisation of Non-European workers is very little developed. This applies to all Non-Europeans, but it applies especially to Africans. There is in existence an African General Workers' Union which came to life in 1937 in response to the propaganda in the field of industrial organisation which was linked with Mrs. Ballinger's election campaign, but it has had a very precarious existence ever since although it has great possibilities. Under a later section of this report, some of the more recent activities of the Union will be noted, from which it will be apparent that here as elsewhere, in the special character of the South African labour field and the legal position of its African section, trade Union activity seems likely to follow rather than to precede wage regulation; that is, that where trade union organisers fail to establish themselves as the negotiators of agreements for improved conditions of employment, they may make an effective appeal as protectors of the rights established by Government action through Wage Determination.

A good deal of the weakness of Non-European organisation in an area such as Port Elizabeth with its developing industrial life is no doubt to be explained to some extent by the weakness of European trade unionism in this area. Indeed, except for an active Union of Leather Workers and a strong organisation of Tramwaymen, there is no real trade union activity in this city except among organisations with craft and overseas connections.

Yet in spite of the absence of organisation, conditions for the lower paid workers in Port Elizabeth have improved to a greater extent, over a wider field and in a shorter space of time than in any other centre in the Union. This has been done through Wage Board activity encouraged and largely inspired by sympathetic and interested Europeans, including members of the City Council, and by constant and, we believe, effective pressure from this office consequent upon the increased knowledge of and contact with the area resulting from Mrs. Ballinger's connection as a Member of Parliament with it. Indeed, soon Port Elizabeth will be in a position to claim that most of its industries are regulated by Wage Determination, or Industrial Council agreements, with minimum wage rates varying from £1. 4. 0. to £1. 12. 6. per week. These are the highest minima so far established in the Union and, taken with the recent successful attempts on the part of the Municipal authorities to provide not only better but cheaper housing than Africans can obtain elsewhere in the Union, they represent an important step towards a decent standard of living for the African people. Further information on this subject is given later in this report.

East London.

The East London area of the Cape is a very backward area so far as trade and industrial organisation is concerned. A small but valiant group of Europeans continue their efforts to stimulate interest through a co-ordinating Trade Union Committee. On the African side, the city is the headquarter of an African organisation known as the United Industrial and Commercial

Workers' Union, with a membership of several hundreds, of whom a considerable number are not "in compliance" according to rule. The secretary of this Union is Clements Kadalie, at one time secretary of the original and now defunct I.C.U. of Africa and later of the Independent I.C.U. of Africa, also now defunct. His present organisation is apparently a successor to the Independent I.C.U. which itself arose as a dissenting off-shoot of the original I.C.U.

In addition, there is a struggling organisation of Non-European railway workers in East London under the organising secretaryship of E. Tsenyego.

Natal and the Orange Free State.

Little is known of African industrial organisational development in Durban, Natal or Bloemfontein, Orange Free State, the two remaining areas of industrialism in South Africa of outstanding importance from the point of view of African industrial movements. Durban's unskilled and labouring force is mainly drawn from near-by Zulu reserves. In consequence, its organisation presents difficulties akin to that of the Native labour force employed on indentured contract by the gold mining industry of the Witwatersrand. There is a strong organisation of the sugar workers employed in the sugar factories and cane fields adjacent to Durban, but this is predominantly Indian and, as such, is registered in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act. Some accounts of its activities have been given in earlier reports of this office and is added to under the next section of this report.

In Bloemfontein, there is a branch, apparently autonomous, of the I.C.U. of Africa. Its activities, however, seem to be more political and social than industrial.

SECTION II.

In recent reports from this office, activities of the office have been reviewed under the headings "Industrial", "Co-operative" and "Miscellaneous". That review has never been exhaustive since the ramifications of the work of the office, even in the defined fields of industrial and co-operative propaganda, organisation and negotiation in which it set itself mainly to function, are very widespread; but as time goes on, and Africans acquire an understanding of and a determination themselves to work for their own needs, it becomes impossible, particularly under the heading "industrial", to do more than note what the office regards as the more significant of the developments with which it is associated.

A. INDUSTRIAL.

I. Port Elizabeth Wage Board Enquiry into 27 Trades.

In the last report issued by this office, a statement was given in regard to the combined attempt of the Friends of Africa, on behalf of the Port Elizabeth African General Workers Union, and the Eastern Province Trades & Labour Council, on behalf of the Port Elizabeth unskilled workers generally, to establish a wage level in the 27 trades under enquiry by the Wage Board that would not be less than that secured under Determination 70 covering the Commercial & Distributive Trades. The fear was then expressed that this attempt might fail through representations by employers on the lines of Mr. Goldsmith's letter to the City Council of Port Elizabeth, copy of which was included in that report. That letter deprecated, not the principle of a rise in unskilled wages but the establishment of higher minima in such centres as Port Elizabeth and Cape Town than those pertaining in other industrial centres in the Union. It was recorded that,

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