

A.M. 125-125

MEMORANDUM PRESENT^{ed} TO THE VISITING BRITISH TRADE UNION DELEGATES, BY THE COUNCIL OF NON-EUROPEAN TRADE UNIONS (TVL)., AT A MEETING HELD ON THE 14TH. NOVEMBER, 1953:

(A).

DIFFICULTIES FACING AFRICAN TRADE UNIONS.

1. Office accommodation.
 2. African workers are not recognised as Employees, and it is therefore difficult to get the Employers to recognise or negotiate with African Trade unions.
 3. The big labour turnover :
 - (a) Migratory labour system;
 - (b) Bulk of Africans employed in the unskilled or semi-skilled positions.
 4. Organisers of African trade unions are refused access to the workers in factories.
 5. There are legal disabilities which prevent African trade unions from taking action to improve conditions or settle disputes. For example, the Industrial Conciliation Act, Masters and Servants Act, Labour Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act, Mine & Works Act, and the Native Regulation Act of 1911. The bad laws make all strikes illegal, and breaches of Contracts become criminal offences instead of civil offences (i.e. regulations under War Measure 145 - compulsory arbitration.)
- The lack of common language amongst the different African tribes and the opportunity of splitting the workers, by stirring up into tribal hatred, e.g. the fights in the compounds due to Government policy.
- The low level of education which makes it difficult to reach workers with written information, and also makes it hard to find leaders capable of carrying out the necessary administrative duties in the trade unions.
6. The unco-operative and unsympathetic attitude of most of the European trade unions.
 7. The underlying racial structure of South Africa, which affects the trade unions' dealings with government officials and departments.
 8. The pass laws and curfew regulations restrict freedom of movement and prevents members from attending meetings at night, The residential areas are widely scattered with

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poor transport facilities. Also travelling to and from work, and long queueing hours prevent easy movement, for example, workers start queueing at Alexandra Township at about 4 a.m. and may not return home again before 9 p.m. Distances from the centre of town to Orlando Township - 12 miles, and to Jabavu and Moroka Townships - 15 miles.

11. Mine workers cannot easily be reached as meetings on proclaimed ground (i.e. mining property) are prohibited, and the workers are segregated in compounds where the Organisers are refused entry. Mine labour is entirely migratory. "

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DISABILITIES OF THE AFRICAN WORKERS.

1. The general social and economic disabilities of members of a subject race.
2. Discriminatory laws e.g. Apprenticeship Act which prevents Africans from learning a skilled trade.
3. Mines & Works Act which actually includes the colour-bar provision and prevents Africans from doing any skilled work.
4. The Unemployment Insurance Act excludes Africans earning less than £3.10.0. basic wages, from participation. In practice, this means excluding 99% of Africans.
5. The Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act provides for the exclusion of Africans from the minimum working conditions i.e. hours of work, leave, overtime, conditions etc. contained in the Factories Act.
6. In the Workmens' Compensation Act, it provides for reduced benefits as compared with rates laid down for coloureds and Europeans.
7. The Pass laws prevent the African workers from selling their labour freely in the market. Agricultural labour is now largely provided either by convict labour (Farm Jail system), or by urban workers turned out of the cities under the Pass Regulations.

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8. The existence of prejudice and race hatred and the difficulties of language barriers which prevent the African workers from receiving a fair hearing for their complaints.
9. The attitude of European employers who demand the implicit obedience and regard of their employees.
10. The uneconomic and wasteful approach to African labour e.g. reluctance of employers to mechanise, thus rendering manual labour excessively heavy and keeping wages low owing to low productivity.
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11. The tacit colour bar which operates to prevent recognition for skill or ability among Africans e.g. however intelligent or able an African worker may be, the system prevents him from being put in charge of workers of other races. This discrimination is practised and reinforced by the majority of European workers and trade unions, particularly in the craft industries.
12. The entire system precludes any ambition for the African worker to improve his economic and social position e.g. he may own Fixed Property in the urban areas and his right to remain in his home might disappear with the loss of his job. By reason of a pass law this may happen. There is no certainty and no security in the life of the African worker, who bears the laws in addition to the normal disabilities of working classes.
13. The lack of social and recreation facilities.
14. Bad housing conditions and the Location system.
15. Inadequate social security measures for African workers.

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TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961

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