

SOUTH AFRICAN TIN WORKER'S UNION  
(HEAD OFFICE)

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EP 7.6.1

MEMORANDUM OF PROPOSALS FOR INCREASED  
WAGES AND IMPROVED CONDITIONS OF WORK

SUBMITTED TO

THE SOUTH AFRICAN METAL CONTAINERS,  
CLOSURES AND ALLIED MANUFACTURERS  
ASSOCIATION AND ITS MEMBERS.

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PROPOSALS FOR INCREASED WAGES AND IMPROVED CONDITIONS OF WORK  
SUBMITTED BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN TIN WORKER'S UNION TO THE S. A.  
METAL CONTAINERS, CLOSURES AND ALLIED MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION  
AND ITS MEMBERS:

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We are hereby submitting Proposals for increased wages and improved conditions of work on behalf of workers in the employ of members of your Association.

GENERAL SUBMISSIONS:

We want to submit that it is a commonly known fact that South Africa's industries, commercial enterprises, institutions, and individuals have always relied on cheap labour force. Whilst such a policy has no doubt vastly benefitted the employers, it has at the same time lead to malnutrition, ill-health, poverty and degradation of the mass of the non-white workers.

It is our contention that ultimately an economy based on low wages must collapse or, at any rate, be subject to extreme tension and crisis. We submit that the workers whom we represent, whose labour is helping to build the South African economy, are entitled to a remuneration adequate enough to enable them to enjoy the amenities of our modern civilisation. In a country with an abundance of rich natural resources such as gold, diamonds, iron, coal, agricultural and modern industries built by the workers, it should not be necessary for the workers to live in slums, in temporary breeze block shelters, in crowded and filthy locations and in some of the newly developed housing schemes totally inadequate, bereft of civilised amenities, and at rentals far beyond the means of the workers who are directed to live in them. It should not be necessary for them to live below the bread line, as most of them do. They should be able to provide their children with adequate schooling including higher education if they so desire. They should be able to save enough on their earnings to ensure a measure of security in their old age(which most of them do not reach to-day due to malnutrition and the consequence bodily disease.)

We sincerely hope that the employers will not dispute the right of the non-European workers to a fair share of the modern civilisation. The first concession the employers must make to this principle if they are not merely paying lip service to the word "civilisation," is to increase the wages of their workers, which at present - as we hope to show later - are no more than starvation wages.

THE COST OF LIVING:

We do not wish to weary you with a diatribe on the present cost of living. We are convinced that there is not one honest person who can dispute the commonly known fact that most non-European worker's earnings are well below the most essential minimum requirements.

Professor O. P. F. Horwood of the Department of Economics of the University of Natal, in his findings published in August, 1958 states :-  
"It is unfortunate, I think, that the survey of family Expenditure (and Incomes) carried out in 1955 (and published at the end of 1957) by the Bureau of Census and Statistics as the basis of new Consumer Prices Index Number should have been confined to Europeans only. Henceforth we shall remain ignorant of the changes in living costs of a representative, Union-wide example of African families. The uncritical application of the so-called "cost of living" index to African communities usually seriously misleading. There is no doubt at all that the present (as will the revised) cost of living index substantially understates the increase in living cost of the average African.

Professor Horwood then deals with the cost of food, clothing, transport and taxation, and the results are as follows:-

(Food)...../2.

FOOD:

"In 1944 and again in 1951 the Department of Economics of the University of Natal made close enquiry into what is deemed to be the Minimum needs of an African family of man, wife, and three children in Durban, on the basis of the "minimum scale for Native recommended by the Union Department of Public Health." Nutrition experts told me it is very far from being luxury diet. The 1951 budget was :-

	s.	d.	
Man	12.	3.	
Wife	8.	10.	
Boy, 16 years	11.	3½	
Girl, 12 years	8.	10.	
Girl, 10 years	7.	10½	
	<hr/>		
	£2.	9.	1. per week, or
	<hr/>		£10. 12. 8. per month.

Since 1951 the official index of food prices has risen considerably, to 258.5 in June, 1958 (base 1938 equals 100) raising the weekly food budget in the same proportion gives a total of £14.17.9d. per month to-day."

RENTAL:

"Quoting the President of the Natal Chamber of Industries who said in his address at the Annual General Meeting of the Chamber in 1950 "that 20 per cent is a reasonable proportion for the rental of a minimum monthly wage of £10....." discloses the following :-

HOUSE RENTALS IN DURBAN:

<u>Location:</u>	<u>1. Room</u>	<u>2 Room &amp; K.</u>	<u>3 Room &amp; K.</u>	<u>4 Room &amp; K.</u>
<u>Lamontville:</u>	-	17/6 to £4.12.0.	£2.10.0. to £4.15.6.	£3, to £5. 8. 6.
<u>Chesterville:</u>	-	12/6 to £4. 8.6.	£1. 7.6. to £4.19.3.	
<u>Kwa Mashu:</u>	-	Semi-Detached	£2.18.6. £3.13.9.	

At Lamont ville and Chesterville the lower rentals are paid by those whose income (i.e. family earnings) does not exceed £15. a month. After that 3.0d. out of every additional 10.0d. earned is added to the basic, "sub-economic" rent.

At Kwa Mashu there are additional charges for water and the new educational charge of 2.0d. a month."

TRANSPORT:

Transport costs are :-

For Lamontville: 16/- per month for all rail season ticket to nearest station (entailing long walk.)

6d. each way by bus (which takes the worker nearer his home.)

(for)...../3.

for Chesterville: 4d. each way by bus.

for Kwa Mashu £1.10.0. per month by rail (this does not include bus fares from Kwa Mashu to the Railway station)

8d. each way by bus, 1/- by taxi.

The above figures do not include transport costs from central town to the area of work and back.

CLOTHING:

"what is a reasonable monthly charge for clothing for a family of five? I suggest £2 a month is extremely moderate".

FAMILY COST BUDGET:

	£.	s.	d.
Food	14.	17.	9.
Rent	2.	10.	0.
Transport	1.	0.	0.
Clothing	2.	0.	0.
	<hr/>		
	£20.	7.	9.
	<hr/> <hr/>		

The above figures do not include such expenses as Church, Trade Union subscriptions, medical expenses, for newspapers, for books and entertainments, insurance, for saving for a "rainy day" and ones old age and for the numerous other small and big things that make up a modern civilised life etc.

Above all, the above figures in themselves are conservative, and this is borne out not only by Professor Horwood's admission, but by the fact that the above figures relate to investigations conducted in 1958.

We are not prepared to admit that all the non-European workers are entitled to a bare animal subsistence level, we claim to all benefits of civilisation and we wish to state emphatically that the present wages paid to the workers are to the great extent responsible for the misery of the people we are speaking for. It is time the employers realised the consequences of the low wages paid to the workers.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF LOW WAGES:

The non-European worker is compelled to send his wife out to work and to drive their children into gainful occupation at a most unbecoming age. For the wages earned by the majority of the non-European workers are most certainly not enough to maintain the bare subsistence level for their families, let alone to lead a life befitting a civilised human being. The result is the break up of the non-European family life, an alarming increase in juvenile delinquency, a growing tendency to seek illicit means of supplementing the family budget. Still, the overwhelming majority of the non-Europeans desperately try to eke out an existence on the basis of the wages earned by them. They cut down on essential foods because they are beyond their reach. They maintain a diet deficient of health-giving strength and their physical efficiency is deteriorating. They easily succumb to diseases and are riddled with tuberculosis.

In this instance we quote statistics from the International Labour Organisation in so far as unskilled wage rates are concerned as percentage of skilled rates for the year 1957 :-

United Kingdom	.....	88%
Australia	.....	86%
Germany	.....	77%
United States	.....	76%
South Africa	.....	20%

Dealing with wages paid to unskilled workers, the Board of Trade and Industries said that "whereas in the Western World the spread between the highest and lowest rates of wages is usually about 30% and seldom more than 50%, in the Union of South Africa it is several hundred per cent".

Has not the time come for a drastic revision in the whole wage structure of unskilled and semi-skilled workers ?

The responsibility for this disastrous state of affairs rests entirely with the employers who persist in paying wages with which it is impossible to keep body and souls together.

Other results of these very low wages are :-

Bad living conditions with whole families living in one room in temporary breeze-block shelters - which after awhile become permanent, in patched up dilapidated hessian shacks, in overcrowded and filthy locations, in jerry built townships without street names or any form of lighting and having to share communal water taps and lavatories.

The cutting down of essential foods because they are beyond the reach of the workers, causing malnutrition and numerous bodily diseases.

Ethel Wix B. A., writes in Race Relations Journal 1953 :

"The incidence of malnutrition in the Union of South Africa is extremely high. In their book on Malnutrition, Drs. J. and T. Gillman state that "the majority of Africans suffer from a type of chronic malnutrition," and Senator Brookes finds that "malnutrition is a common thing among our Native children.

If children are allowed to grow up malnourished - the burden of this falls on the state in one form or other. Men grow up who are physically unfit for even moderately heavy work. Worse still the lethargy of mind which results from malnutrition and makes men sluggish and inefficient. It is certain that the productive power of this country could be greatly increased if all the people, children and adults, were properly fed," say Dr. Niel MacVicar in "The People's Food" (published by the Institute of Race Relations.)

Drs. Gillman state : "Between twenty and forty years of age individuals should be most productive and most socially useful section of the community. However, a large proportion of adult Africans are unfit for the strains of the arduous work they are required to perform as unskilled workers. The symptoms of old age take place some ten to twenty years earlier in the African than in the European."

After mentioning several types of ill-health, Dr Gale (in the Hand Book of Race Relations in South Africa) states : "The kinds of ill-health specifically mentioned above have their roots in poverty and ignorance. or both together. It is for this reason that their incidence is so much greater among non-Europeans. A mere increase of curative and even personal preventative health services cannot diminish this incidence --- First and foremost there is need for improved nutrition of the people. All else is secondary, including the medical services themselves..... chronic malnutrition provides the soil in which infection flourishes."

Dr. Gale continues: "The statement of the Gluckman Report remains true: "Vast numbers of people in this country do not earn enough to purchase the minimum of food, shelter and clothing to maintain themselves in health..... the position of the poverty stricken town dweller of whatever race, is particularly unfortunate, as he is completely dependent upon his cash wage."

According to Miss Ethel Wix, a Medical Officer who prepared graphs of accident rates in one of the largest Industrial concerns in the Union of South Africa stated that the heavy incidence of accidents in the middle of the morning was due to lack of subsistence, and that with proper feeding the accident rate would be reduced.

Stating that poverty caused as a result of low wages was the basic reason for Cato Manor Riots, Mr. S. Borquain, the Director of Durban's Bantu Administration, said "Pay more for the labour of the Bantu people, give them a living wage, a wage on which they can just only not live, but one on which they can live as decent, law abiding and progressive people. This is the urgent appeal I wish to make.

"The danger of an upheaval, of violence, arson and bloodshed will remain on Durban's door step as long as the slums of Cato Manor are permitted to remain. To this I must add, the warning that slums of Cato Manor will remain as long as the average earnings of the Bantu workers of Durban place decent living and permanent housing beyond their reach..

The basic and ultimate reason for the upheaval is an economic one: the poverty of the Urban Bantu, the discrepancy between his earning capacity and his cost of living, his ability to meet the demands of modern times in a city modelled on the Western way of life, his inability even to meet barest necessity of life, to feed, clothe, educate and house himself and his family, continued Mr. Borquain.

Recently, Mr. Ken Firth, President of the Natal Chamber of Industries said, that non-white workers in South Africa must be given right to civilised mankind, "to perform any task of which they are capable and to bargain collectively for their services." He went further to say, "trade unions would give industrialists plenty of headaches and a few hard knocks, big wages could not be regulated in any other way and non-Europeans must be paid a wage on which they can live and prosper."

On the 25th. November, 1960, Dr. J. H. Abramson, head of the Institute of Family and Community Health, said that 99 percent of the non-white workers in Durban are ill-fed. He said that the diet of African families did improve when the family income increased and that higher income Africans were found to be better nourished than lower paid Africans.

We want to state that our economy is already paying a high price for apartheid and cannot carry further burden. Those who are not moved by human sufferings which flows from the poverty of starvation wages, should be persuaded to support an increase in wages by considering the cost to the nation in low productivity, inefficiency, ill-health, boycotts crime and labour discontents, and absenteeism.

PROFITS MADE BY SOME OF THE LARGE COMPANIES:

Whilst there has been a steady rise in the cost of living, which actually reduced the purchasing-power of the workers, employers have been making record profits as the under-mentioned figures indicate:-

- (a) The Sugar companies in Natal made a net profit of over £3 million in the financial year ended 1959;
- (b) Natal Coal £187, 000 as compared with £162, 000 in 1958;
- (c) S. A. Coal £310, 000 " " " £292, 000 " "
- (d) Brick and Pot £45,000 " " " £39, 000 " "
- (e) Woolworths £436,000 " " " £289, 000 " "
- (f) Cavala Ltd. £88, 000 " " " £83, 000 " "
- (g) Consolidated Textile Mills made a net profit of £1, 193, 086 in 1960 as compared with £458, 618 in 1959.
- (h) Firms with international connections such as Unilever Ltd., Dunlop Ltd., and others also made record profits.

In the drive for profits, so-called "efficiency measures" were introduced, and this resulted in hundreds of workers being displaced. Whilst this has benefitted the employers immensely and has boosted profits, unemployment has increased and the purchasing-power of the workers has been reduced.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND SKILLED WORK BEING CLOSED TO NON-WHITES:

Thousands of non-whites are to-day unemployed, and at least one in every 5 Indian is unemployed, the figure among the Coloureds is also high, and many thousands of African workers are locked in Reserves, unable to leave the Reserves because of influx control regulations, and in any case there is no employment for them in the urban areas.

While the scourge of unemployment haunts every non-white worker, skilled jobs are vacant but for whites only. In practically every sphere of employment skilled work is barred to non-whites, and thousands of pounds are being spent in recruiting skilled labour from overseas. This is a callous wastage of manpower, and the policy adopted by employers in refusing to make use of non-white labour is both short-sighted and neative, and this must affect the economy of the country because non-whites, constituting the majority of the population, are the biggest buyers of the things that are produced in the country, and entry by them into skilled work and the granting to them of increased wages will naturally boost the economy of the country.

OUR PROPOSALS FOR WAGE RATES:

It should be clear from what has been said in the body of this Memorandum that it is impossible for any worker to live and support his family with the present wages.

From all standpoints therefore, the fact is inescapable - wage increases for Non-European workers are long overdue and they must earn a living wage.

We propose, therefore, an immediate INCREASES IN THE BASIC WAGE OF NOT LESS THAN R4. 00. per week for all workers irrespective of the work they perform.

ANNUAL LEAVE AND PAID HOLIDAYS:

The South African Tin Worker's Union proposes that the provisions for annual leave and paid public holidays be as follows:-

- (1) Three weeks paid annual leave.
- (2) All public holidays on full pay.

The Wage Determination No. 173 provides for TEN ( 10 ) working days leave and payment for FIVE public holidays, but these provisions are no longer adequate to meet the present conditions of industrial development in South Africa.

It is a recognised principle that an annual leave of recuperation and rest is essential for all workers and pays handsome dividends in a stable labour force, higher production and more contentment.

What sheet metal workers cannot understand is that in many industries and occupations workers enjoy paid annual leave of three weeks duration while they receive only two week leave. Why this discrimination? They work hard, and in many cases, harder than any other section of the workers, and yet they receive only two weeks leave. We submit that their annual leave be increased to three weeks on full pay.

Furthermore we propose that all statutory public holidays be granted to all workers on full pay.

What is the use of a declared statutory public holiday if it is only sectional in its scope? This is most unfair and unjust, and the position must be adjusted so that all workers can enjoy public holidays. The present position is that, in many cases, workers work on public holidays as if they were ordinary days of work, or if the factory closes, the workers suffer a loss of a day's pay. We propose, therefore, that the public holidays be made real public holidays with full pay for all workers in the industry.

WORKING HOURS:

We propose that the working hours be reduced to FORTY(40 hours) per week. At present, the majority of the workers in the industry have their hours fixed at 46 hours per week in terms of the Factories Act. These working hours were fixed nearly two decades ago, when the expansion in the industrial development of South Africa as in the actual productivity of labour.

(The)...../8.



The 40 hour week already operates in South Africa in the Garment industry in the Transvaal and in the printing industry, and has not materially affected the cost structure of these industries in a detrimental manner. Many other industries have reduced their working hours from 46 hours per week as a step towards the eventual introduction of the 40 hour week.

The principle of the 40 hour week has been accepted in many civilised countries of the world and has been in operation for many years in New Zealand, France, the U. S. A., and Australia. As far back as 1935, the I. L. O. of which organisation South Africa is a member, came out in a convention, in favour of the 40 hour week.

Long working hours tend to undermine the workers' health and hence reduces his productive ability. This is especially true where hard physical labour is required or where concentration is needed in the use of machinery of repetitive character.

The adoption of a 5-day week in most industries has resulted in the lengthening of the working day, which for non-European workers presents not only the problem of added fatigue and a decline in their working life, but also the immediate problem of how much time the worker spends on proceeding to and from his place of residence to his place of work. Due to the fact that in many cases African Townships are situated far from industrial areas or City centres on account of Government policy, a great hardship has been imposed on thousands of African workers in many ways.

Not the least of these hardships is the time factor in getting to work. Thousands of African workers rise as early as 4 a. m. in order to get to work at 7 a. m. or 8 a. m., and often only reach home after a strenuous day's labour after 8 p. m. in the evening. In fact, many men only really see their children awake at the week-ends. Not only the distance from home to place of employment the bugbear, but there are also the added problems of inadequate transport facilities.

A reduction in working hours will prove beneficial not only to the workers concerned but to the industries far-sighted enough to agree to such a policy. It will have the direct effect of:-

- (a) Improving production by raising productivity of the labour force used.
- (b) Reducing fatigue and hence reducing ill-health and absenteeism.
- (c) Reducing the factors making for accidents as a result of tiredness.
- (d) Improving the quality of the work performed, reducing errors and spoilt work.
- (e) Leading to better understanding between management and labour and thus opening the way to greater productive development.

Therefore from every point of view, the reduction of the working hours per week will benefit industry as a whole and is regarded as a necessary step forward in the development of South Africa's industrial growth.

INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL:

We propose that a National Industrial Council be established for the Industry, which would regulate wages and conditions of work on a national basis, embracing every worker and employer in the Industry.

We cannot over-stress the advantages the establishment of this Council would have in creating harmonious relations between the workers and employers.

We propose that negotiations be commenced immediately for the establishment of such a Council.

FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE  
S. A. TIN WORKER'S UNION.

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