SOUTH AFRICAN CONGRESS
OF TRADE UNIONS

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Report

An injury to One is an injury to All
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Dear Comrades,

DEATH OF COMRADE LAWRENCE NKOSI

It is with the deepest regret that I open my report with the announcement of the death of our dearly loved comrade, Lawrence Nkosi, and I shall be grateful if you will all rise to pay silent tribute to him.

Comrade Nkosi died on 13th January, 1962, at the age of 43 having spent the last five years of his life in a Sanatorium for Tuberculotics. He was a former member of our National Executive Committee, ex-Treasurer of the National Union of African Laundering, Cleaning and Dyeing Workers and a former Executive Committee member of the Furniture, Mattress and Bedding Workers' Union.

Although he was already suffering from tuberculosis, he was one of the 156 trade unionists and others arrested for High Treason in December, 1955 and he was on trial for a year before being discharged because of his ill-health. The rigours of this year contributed to his death at such an early age.

Throughout the period of his final illness, Comrade Nkosi inspired us with his high spirits, his courage and his absolute confidence in the success of our struggle. He marked every victory won by the workers and when he heard the news of the collapse of the Treason Trial and the acquittal of all the accused, he sent SACTU a jubilant letter of congratulation.

Despite the fact that it was known that he was dying, he was still subjected to the attentions of the Security Police who, in 1961, interrogated him in his ward at the Sanatorium.

It is sad to know that he was separated from his family during these last five years as they could rarely afford the trainfare to travel from the Transvaal to visit him at Botha's Hill in Natal. He was alone when he died as none of his family was present. But he died knowing that he was part of the great movement for liberation and when final victory is ours, he will be remembered.

To his two sons, Sylvester and Petros, his mother and father and his family we send our sincere sympathy. Conference will be asked to discuss the establishment of a Trust Fund to help to pay for the schooling of Comrade Nkosi's two sons.

GENERAL REPORT - INTRODUCTION.

On behalf of the South African Congress of Trade Unions I am privileged to present the attached report to you. It is my task to report here on the heroism of the trade unionists who have been active since our last Conference; on the wide-scale national activities of our Congress and on the pioneering work which has been achieved. It is also my duty to analyse trends in our movement and to convey our urgent needs, shortcomings and problems.
One can judge SACTU not by what is said of it either good or bad, but by its activities, by its facing up to its responsibilities and the handling of the day to day needs of the workers.

The outstanding characteristic of SACTU is its ability to express the workers' aspirations for higher wages, improved working conditions, social security, peace and freedom. This is so because our Congress is deeply rooted in the masses of the workers. Our field workers are linked with the workers in the factories, mines, compounds, farms and in the areas where they live. They stimulate trade union activity by their example of sacrifice and by their constant explanations to the workers of the root causes of their sufferings. Thus SACTU develops the initiative of the working people far beyond action for increases in pay packets.

SACTU is a working class organisation representing the interests of the working people, more especially that of the homeless, voteless and landless masses of the working class of our land, whose daily lives are at the mercy of the dominating white minority. SACTU conducts a fierce struggle against exploitation. Capitalism thrives on profits derived from the workers; on the exploitation of workers and the deprivation of human rights. Such is the nature of capitalism and it holds no brief for the aspirations of the producers of its wealth. It rejects everything that stands in the way of profits and uses its power mercilessly to crush its opposition. The evils of capitalism, namely, poverty, illness, persecution and the lack of rights are felt more keenly today by the workers than in the past. It is the nature of capitalism to use many devices to camouflage its naked exploitation of the workers. In South Africa, the device used to create super profits is racial discrimination. White people are presented as superior to black people. They are granted privileges while blacks are subjected to the cruelest treatment. Through racial discrimination, employers maintain the cheap labour system. They know, as every one of us knows, that the non-whites have the same talents as all human beings; that they aspire to the same heights as any other people in the world. But if they dare admit this will smash the whole edifice of their system. They perpetuate myths of superiority and encourage workers to remain divided through racial hatred.

The non-white people, particularly the Africans, have witnessed the rapes of their women in broad daylight and the humiliation of their manhood. They have seen their children die in their thousands because of malnutrition, hunger and starvation in this land of honey and gold. Many women have been made widows, children orphaned, their husbands and fathers having been murdered in South African farms, after having been sent there for not possessing the correct document - the pass.

Through Bantu Education, African children are educated for ignorance. Through Job Reservation, Coloureds Indians and others suffer more than any other section of the racial communities of the South African population. These are the devices which the capitalists use to prevent the working class from uniting to achieve freedom and happiness.

The time has come for the South African white and non-white workers to unite under the bold and courageous leadership of the S.A. Congress of Trade Unions. Of course, unity cannot be regarded as something to be arrived at by Union leaders. It is a matter which must be debated publicly and democratically before the workers in their Unions. It should not be regarded as an abstract or sentimental matter, for it rests on clearly defined material needs which can be named and felt, namely, the strengthening of the workers' capacity to struggle against oppression and injustice; the growth and influence of trade unions and the development
of the workers' resistance against exploitation.

We are not afraid to tell the workers the truth or to risk the hostility of the other trade union bodies which fear to show the reasons for the economic plight of the workers and are not prepared to tell the workers that they cannot win economic freedom without removing the pass system or discriminatory legislation which impedes economic improvement.

SACTU firmly believes that in the present political and economic set-up in South Africa it is imperative for a genuine trade union movement which purports to cater for all sections of the working class, to participate in the struggle for the removal of all discriminatory laws which deny the non-white workers fundamental trade union rights.

It is common knowledge in our country that the demand of the non-white workers for the removal of the industrial colour bar has always been labelled as participation in politics by the Government and reaction-ary trade unionists. Yet, no genuine trade unionist can deny that there can be no fundamental change in the economic life of the non-white workers, so long as these restrictions remain the order of the day.

Hence SACTU is compelled to regard with suspicion any trade unionist who opposes the participation of the South African Congress of Trade Unions in the struggle for the national liberation of millions of oppressed workers.

We believe that it is now time for every worker and trade union leader worthy of the name to ensure that they present the true facts to the workers, namely, they are oppressed as a class and that non-whites, in addition, are also oppressed as a race. We believe that the whole cause of our sufferings and disabilities flows from these facts. When that certainty of conviction is firmly rooted in our minds then we shall be able to understand the danger of the slogan 'no politics' in the trade unions.

The world has recognised the correctness of SACTU's policy and it has applauded the courageous leadership of SACTU. We believe in the unity of the working class both at home and internationally.

+ If we speak of higher wages we must speak of the unity required to win these wages.

+ If we speak against Job Reservation we must speak of the unity of action required to oppose it.

+ If the workers want to speak out against the social injustice and tyranny of which they are the victims, they must unite with other workers and other peoples fighting those same evils. Without unity, a thing cannot be achieved.

+ There can be no real trade union action without a struggle to remove the political disabilities which prevent the workers from achieving their aims.

We know that whilst there are some white workers who genuinely believe in working class unity we are forced to state that the majority of white workers treat the non-white workers with contempt and disdain. To them, the non-white worker is a 'boy' or a 'girl'. The capitalist class has deliberately fostered these attitudes among the white workers by making them the aristocrats of the labour force. The non-white workers and trade union leaders will no longer accept an inferior position. In SACTU they have found a home where true equality is practised. Non-white trade unionists are no longer prepared to have the official titles of trade union Secretaries while they are, in fact, glorified messengers.
They reject the slogan of "No politics" in the trade unions, for as long as political legislation strangles trade union organisation there can be no progress. The non-white workers insist on changing the position completely so that a white minority no longer rules over a non-white majority. "No politics in the trade union movement" has only one purpose, namely, the entrenchment of this white minority. History has shown this to be true for this political domination of the non-white workers has kept them from skilled jobs. We want nothing less than full equality for all workers.

SACTU has blazed a new trail in the labour movement. Its successes have been recorded at each of its Annual National Conferences. 53,000 workers of all races, united under the banner of SACTU is a sufficient demonstration of the success it has achieved despite severe persecution.

A full record of the activities since its last Conference will show that SACTU is building up a mighty trade union movement in this country. We are convinced that SACTU will become the dominating force in the South African labour movement.

The President, in his address, has referred you to the present position in the trade union movement. He has once again expressed our desire to bring about a single, united trade union co-ordinating body in this country. The Policy Statement issued by our Management Committee on this question reflects our standpoint and we attach hereto the full text of this statement:

POLICY STATEMENT

on the

DECISION OF THE TRADE UNION COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA (THE T.U.C.) TO ADMIT TRADE UNIONS OF AFRICAN WORKERS TO FULL MEMBERSHIP.

The decision of the Trade Union Council of South Africa to admit trade unions of African workers into its ranks is a significant event in the South African labour movement. As the majority of existing African trade unions are affiliated to the S.A. Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) it is necessary for SACTU to state its views on the situation.

The abolition of the colour-bar by the T.U.C. is warmly welcomed by SACTU. This change in policy, which is a return to the policy of the Trades and Labour Council, has come about as the result of international condemnation of colour discrimination, the difficulties experienced by the T.U.C. at International Labour Conferences, the phenomenal growth of African trade unions and the growing internal demand for unity among workers.

The immediate question which is posed as the result of this decision is that of the future of the trade union movement in South Africa. Is the time now opportune for the coming together of SACTU and the T.U.C.? Is there to be a leap forward in trade union action on a united basis?

At its inaugural Conference, SACTU adopted a pledge of multi-racial unity which was enshrined in its Constitution as a declaration of principles. This declaration also stated the views of SACTU on the need for a single, united trade union co-ordinating body. An extract from
from this Declaration of Principles reads as follows:

"The whole experience of the trade union movement the world over has established the fact that the movement can only progress on the basis of unity and in the spirit of brotherhood and solidarity of all workers. Trade Unions must unreservedly reject any attempts to sow disunity among the workers, on the basis of colour or nationality, or any other basis.

But the working class can only succeed in this great and noble endeavour if it itself is united and strong, if it is conscious of its inspiring responsibility. The workers of South Africa need a united trade union movement in which all sections can play their part unhindered by prejudice or racial discrimination."

In a sense, the T.U.C. by abandoning its policy of racial exclusiveness has fulfilled one of the requirements for better relationships between white and non-white workers. This opportunity must not be lost and SACTU will do all that it can to initiate talks with a view to mutual cooperation. But a common policy - the very heart of trade union unity - does not exist at present.

Before there can be any question of unity between the T.U.C. and SACTU an unequivocal statement is required from the T.U.C. that it will fight for full and equal workmen's compensation, unemployment insurance, guaranteed annual leave on full pay for all workers, including those on the farms, in domestic service and on the mines and also for the right of every worker, African, Indian and Coloured, as well as white, to engage in skilled occupations and to advancement in industry.

Secondly, if the T.U.C. now admits trade unions of African workers into its ranks, it must make an unequivocal statement that it will campaign for the right of African workers to take strike action to protect their living standards. In terms of the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act, the African workers are the only group of workers who are criminally prosecuted for striking. The Master and Servants Act prohibits strike action by farm workers and domestic workers. Until the T.U.C. campaigns actively for the repeal of these two Acts, the admission of African trade unions into its ranks is of no practical value.

Thirdly, SACTU believes that the successful struggle for economic demands is inextricably bound up with the struggle to remove the political disabilities which impede economic improvements. Every move of the workers for their basic rights in South Africa is hampered by general legislation affecting their right of movement, their right of domicile, their lack of political representation. Every struggle of the workers for higher wages, for better working conditions, even for the smallest advance in factory conditions or for the re-instatement of an unjustly dismissed fellow-
worker - is immediately met by the full force of a Police State organised to restrict every civil human right. It follows that a mere struggle for the economic rights of the workers, without participation in the general struggle for political emancipation would condemn the trade union movement to uselessness and to a betrayal of the interests of the workers.

In other words, unity will be possible only when the T.U.C. accepts the premise that one cannot fight for freedom of association, freedom of speech and freedom of movement unless one also fights for an end to the pass laws and influx control and for the repeal of all repressive legislation which affects all non-white workers generally and the African workers specifically.

Notwithstanding the irresistible urge for unity in the whole trade union movement, the African trade unions will pay a heavy price for unity if they submit to the demand that they abandon their struggle against political discrimination. This is realised by the majority of African trade unions whose very survival is a political issue.

SACTU will continue with all its power to strive for the emancipation of the workers of South Africa. With its 51 affiliated trade unions it will be in the forefront of the struggle for unity in the trade union movement and will at all times stretch out the hand of friendship to the T.U.C. to cooperate on specific issues.


Conference is asked to confirm the above statement.

THE BUDGET

White South Africans have already had to pay dearly for the policies of "baasskap" and "apartheid". The 1962-3 Budget presented last month by the Minister of Finance shows that whites as well as non-whites are going to pay a heavy price - in cash - for the maintenance by brute force of arms of white supremacy.

The Budget contains proposals for -
+ The abolition of the normal 10% discount on income tax.
+ An increase of 18 cents a bottle in the duties on spirits.
+ Higher duties on sparkling wines, unfortified wines and beer.
+ A new duty of 5 cents on paper-back works of fiction.
+ 1 cent a gallon more on petrol and diesel oil.
+ Increased duties on gramophone records.

As the result of these measures, the Government will collect an extra R21,500,000 (£10,250,000) in indirect taxes and R14,200,000 (£7,100,000) from the people - a total of R35,700,00 (£17,350,000).

This entire sum is to be used for "war" on the people!

If it had not been for the increase in defence spending, the new taxes would not have been necessary.
In fact, Defence spending will go up by 67%. ($48,000,000) as compared with last year. A total of $120,000,000 ($60,000,000) will go to the Defence Account. According to the Minister, the main aim of the Budget is "security against external attack as well as against internal disorder." These proposals follow immediately on the "invasion scare" by the Minister of Defence, Fouche.

The indirect taxes will affect everyone. For example, higher petrol prices will mean higher prices of all goods transported by road — such as mealies and coal. Similarly, at a time when liquor will become available to non-whites for the first time as the result of the amendment to the Liquor Act, higher prices are introduced.

With every gallon of petrol, with every paper-back novel, with every gramophone record, with every bottle of wine, the people of our country will be paying for the maintenance of their own oppression! The Government has tried to counteract this by making slight increases in social and war pensions — but these pensions retain their old basis of racial discrimination, with whites getting pensions at much higher rates than non-whites.

This budget for war is a sure sign of the weakness of apartheid — a system of cruel exploitation that can only be maintained by more and more 'sacrifices' from whites and non-whites alike. The budget also reveals how apartheid is grinding the economy downwards, creating mass unemployment, increasing poverty and suffering for the workers.

The Minister of Finance has admitted frankly: "The slow rate of growth of the economy as measured by real income per head, and the sluggishness of net private fixed investments, remain a source of concern." He reported, too, a "less favourable turn" in the economy during the second quarter of 1961 — unemployment shot up, particularly in the building, motor and engineering industries. This tendency has continued for the first three months of 1962.

By increasing defence expenditure, the Government hopes to boost industry. It has been said that "there is hardly one Reef engineering factory not involved in some way in the armaments programme." The new orders for munitions, vehicles and military equipment will be good for the profits of firms such as the African Explosives and Chemicals (a subsidiary of Oppenheimer's Anglo-American empire) and the I.C.I. of Britain which have concluded big deals with the Nationalists. The Government also hopes that the rising tide of unemployment caused by the deepening poverty of the African working people and overseas boycotts of South African products, will be stemmed by the jobs created in the "defence" factories.

It is clear that the Nationalists have not learnt the lessons of history. The Nazis, under Hitler, also believed that they could "solve" the unemployment problem and quell the demands of the workers by building up a "warfare state" in which industry was put on a military basis. For a short while they succeeded in this. But in doing so they caused the greatest national catastrophe Germany has ever known as well as disaster for the whole world. Eventually, Hitler and his like ended their miserable days in an underground bunker with ruin and defeat all around them.

If the Nationalists insist on building up their "warfare" state they, too, and those who back them will face the same telling defeat as did the Nazis. They too will learn that nothing can halt the forward march of the people.
WAGES

1. THE DEMAND FOR NATIONAL LEGISLATION FOR A MINIMUM WAGE OF R2-00 PER DAY.

SACTU has made the demand for a national minimum wage part of our national thinking in South Africa. When we introduced this demand in 1957, following the bus boycott, we were denounced as 'irresponsible' and 'frivolous'. Now, in 1962, the demand has come from individual employers, employers' organisations, chambers of industries and commerce, financial houses and it was also the subject of a resolution adopted by the Trade Union Council at their recent Conference.

So great has been the pressure that the Minister of Labour was forced to debate the matter in Parliament. As you know, he rejected the demand for legislation and stated that the Wage Board would be used to increase wages. But the very fact that he was forced to reply to this national clamour for legislation is an indication of the correctness of our policy. We have previously rejected the machinery of the Wage Board as being too slow to bring wages above the level of the breadline and we once again reject the Minister's solution of the problem of poverty wages. We must intensify our efforts this year so that the pressure on the Government becomes irresistible and the legislation will have to be introduced.

Our demand for legislation for a national minimum wage was highlighted during the February 7th campaign, when, as reported under that heading, copies of the Draft Bill prepared by SACTU were circulated to members of Parliament. The Bill was given national press publicity. In addition, the Durban Local Committee sent copies of the Bill and letters requesting interviews to the Chambers of Commerce and Industries in Natal, the Natal Employers' Association, the System Manager of the South African Railways and Harbours, to the Mayors of Durban and Pinetown and to the Chamber of Industries in Pinetown.

This demand for legislation has been a major part of our activities in all areas during the period under review.

It formed the subject of a memorandum submitted earlier by the Durban Local Committee to all employers' organisations at the time of their Conference in November, 1961 on unemployment, low wages, poverty and the problems of the rural people.

The Port Elizabeth Local Committee circulated a memorandum to the City Council in November, 1961 on rents, police raids, Labour Bureaux, passes, unemployment and the need for a national minimum wage.

In all areas, this demand has been linked with unemployment and was included in the memoranda submitted to the Minister of Labour by the Union of Unemployed Workers (Durban) and the Council of Unemployed Workers (Johannesburg).

It has also been included in all memoranda and in all deputations and press statements on the question of the criminal prosecution of African tenants for rent arrears. The Johannesburg City Council, in deciding to modify the system of collecting rent arrears, has been forced to concede that the problem is largely one of poverty wages.

In all areas this demand for legislation for a national minimum wage has been put forward at all public meetings called by our Local Committees, including those called simultaneously in July and November, 1961 and February, 1962.

The African General Workers' Union, Kimberley, has continually submitted the demand to the Kimberley City Council and employers' organisations.
In addition, the demand for legislation for a national minimum wage Board has been put forward in all memoranda submitted or in oral evidence to wage Boards by Local Committees and affiliated Unions as follows:

**Wage Board Investigation:**

- **Mineral Water Manufacturing Industry:**
  - Witwatersrand Local Committee
  - Durban Local Committee
  - Cape Western Province Local Committee

- **Cement Products Industry:**
  - Witwatersrand Local Committee
  - Durban Local Committee
  - Cape Western Province Local Committee

- **Quarry & Stone Crushing Industry:**
  - Witwatersrand Local Committee
  - Durban Local Committee
  - Cape Western Province Local Committee

- **Soap, Candles, Edible Oils or Fats or Peanut Butter Industry:**
  - Witwatersrand Local Committee
  - Durban Local Committee
  - Cape Western Province Local Committee

- **Fruit, Drying & Packing Industry:**
  - Witwatersrand Local Committee
  - Durban Local Committee
  - Cape Western Province Local Committee

- **Condensed Milk, Cream & Food Products:**
  - Witwatersrand Local Committee
  - Durban Local Committee
  - Cape Western Province Local Committee

- **Wool Washeries:**
  - Witwatersrand Local Committee
  - Durban Local Committee
  - Cape Western Province Local Committee

- **Newspaper Publishing and Distributing:**
  - Witwatersrand Local Committee
  - Durban Local Committee
  - Cape Western Province Local Committee
  - In association with TVL Publishing & Newspaper Distributors' Union.

This demand has also been the subject of negotiations by individual Unions and their employers when discussing wage increases, as follows:

- **Tin Workers' Union:**
  - Durban

- **Twine & Bag Workers' Union:**
  - Durban

- **Municipal Workers' Union:**
  - Durban

- **Match Workers' Union:**
  - Durban

- **Farm, Plantation and Allied Workers' Union:**
  - Transvaal

- **Printing Workers' (Factory Committee):**
  - Transvaal

- **Tobacco Workers (Factory Committee):**
  - Transvaal

- **Transport Workers' Union:**
  - Port Elizabeth

It can be said quite truthfully that our insistence on the need for legislation for a national minimum wage has been like a yeast fermenting in the industrial life of South Africa.

2. **INCREASED WAGES AND PRODUCTIVITY:**

From 1957 to 1961, all demands for increased wages were countered by employers with a cry for increased productivity. Here too, SACTU by its general wages campaign has forced employers to concede that the cry for increased productivity before there can be wage increases is an evasion of the real problem. In a memorandum submitted by Head Office to a Conference of the National Development Foundation held in Johannesburg in October, 1961, we said:

"Your Conference will consider which should be increased first - productivity or wages. We have no hesitation in stating our views on this question. We believe that in
"a modern economy, efficiency must be of a high standard and that workers must be well trained and equipped to produce at a level commensurate with the workers of other modern economies, but it must be understood once and for all that the issue involved is not productivity in the normal dictionary meaning of the word, but a question of what facilities and opportunities are available to the non-white workers to make a greater impact on South Africa's economy.

Education for non-whites is inferior; technical schools are non-existent; colour bars obstruct progress at every turn; living quarters are at such distances from the industrial areas that fatigue and exhaustion must set in before an employee even reaches his place of employment; poverty wages do not only have an effect on the diet of the workers, but the mental strain is immeasurable. It is necessary to face up to the fact that South Africa's economic structure is based on cheap labour and that its expanding economy cannot wait for productivity to be increased, for the wheels of industry must turn and not grind to a standstill.

Our organisation is somewhat perplexed at the continued emphasis on "Bantu" wages as such, for it appears as though it is not appreciated that there are many thousands of non-African workers who receive less than R2-00 per day and who experience equal hardships. Our rank and file members find it difficult to understand the numerous articles and discussions which the press reports on the need for increased productivity in South Africa and employers should clarify their concept of productivity as this is open to various interpretations. Workers, for instance, interpret the employers' demand for increased productivity to mean an indirect speeding up of productivity and of one worker doing the job of two or more to compensate the employer for the increased wage bill arising from general wage increases. This has caused the workers to be most suspicious of the call for increased productivity as they cannot interpret it in any other way.

In conclusion, we request your Conference to bring pressure on the Government to introduce legislation at the next session of Parliament for a national minimum wage for all workers."

Over the past six months, the cries for increased productivity as a prelude to increased wages have become fainter. At the Conference of the National Development Foundation one of the delegates called upon his fellow-industrialists to "drop all talk of increased productivity and to go it on wages." Mr. L. Lulofs, former President of the Federated Chamber of Industries, conceded at a public meeting held in Johannesburg on 27th September, 1961, that the productivity of African workers compares with that of their American and Australian counterparts.

3. ACTUAL WAGE INCREASES.

Mr. Mentz, Chairman of the Central Native Labour Board, stated in East London on 10th April, 1962 that the average minimum earnings of

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unskilled workers had increased from £11 per month to £15 a month. He appears to be extremely proud of this achievement despite the fact that every scientific survey undertaken in recent years has shown that the minimum wage to maintain life for an urban worker and his family is £26 per month. Mr. Mentz stated: "The upgrading of wages on a gradual basis had not disrupted the economy of the country and workers had every reason to be satisfied." Let Mr. Mentz not delude himself. Workers have every reason to be dissatisfied.

Our investigations show that although there have been wage increases the bulk of the non-white workers in South Africa still live far below the breadline. The following are the major increases made in the period under review:

**Commercial Distributive Workers:** The minimum wage has been raised from £2.18.3. p.w. to £4. 2. 6. per week.

**Metal Workers:** The wages of 110,000 African workers in the engineering industry have been raised by 22% during the past year. Unskilled workers are paid an average of £16 per month.

**Oil Workers:** Labourers now receive £22 per month.

**Municipal Workers:**
- **Durban:** The wages of about 12,000 African unskilled workers employed by the Durban City Council were raised in July 1960 to £12. 15. 6. In August 1961 there was a further increase of £2. 3. 6.
- **Johannesburg:** Of a payroll of 20,000 workers, only 600 receive a basic minimum wage of £25 per month. These are the skilled building artisans. About 10,000 men who live in hostels or compounds receive the 'pitifully inadequate' wage of £13 per month. The remaining 5,000 receive £13.17.0 per month. (These figures have been taken from a letter to the Rand Daily Mail of 7th September, 1961 by ex-Councillor Harold McCarthy who criticised the Johannesburg City Council - the wealthiest in South Africa - for paying starvation wages.)

We reiterate: Wages are still below subsistence level. The Minister of Finance said in the Houses of Assembly on 15th February, 1961 that it was estimated that the average per capita income of whites was £410 per year; of Indians £212; of Coloureds £58 and of Africans £46. Professor O.P.F. Horwood of Natal University has estimated that the average per capita income of occupied persons in the Reserves in between £7 and £13 per year.

We have forced the issue of wages to the forefront as the major issue facing workers today and slight gains have been won. But the major battle still lies ahead - the achievement of a living wage for all. The Government and employers have tackled this problem like a mole nibbling at a mountain. In a letter written to the Star on 7th September, 1961 by Head Office we stated:

"The present unemployment crisis which is threatening to engulf South Africa has been brought about by under-consumption, not over-production. The African workers and all underpaid non-white workers represent a vast potential market, hungry for all types of consumer goods, from food and clothes to furniture, books, vehicles, radios, refrigerators and sports equipment.

At present, the non-white workers live below the breadline in a state of semi-health and semi-starvation. South Africa is faced with a choice: either increasing unemployment, lengthening dole queues, dissatisfaction and resentment from all groups of workers, or the immediate introduction of a national minimum wage, increased industrial expansion and jobs for all workers, both black and white."
By our concerted and united action let us force South Africa onto the path of living wages and such industrial expansion that we can turn our country into the workshop of Africa.

The National Executive Committee will welcome discussion on our demand for a national minimum wage of R2.00 (£1) per day. Many affiliated Unions are of the opinion that the demand should be increased, while others hold the view that the majority of the industrial workers of South Africa receive only between £3 - £4 per week and our demand is therefore a realistic one.

CRIMINAL PROSECUTIONS OF AFRICAN TENANTS FOR RENT ARREARS.

The problem of rent and poverty wages are inextricably linked. Despite the fact that Africans are the lowest paid group of all sections of the population they are the only group liable to criminal prosecution for rent arrears. In addition, as they have no freehold rights they can live only in houses built for them by Local Authorities at rents laid down by those Authorities. The rents are so high in relation to income that African workers are faced with the choice of feeding their children or starving them to pay wages. The misery, hardship, resentment and bitterness caused by this system cannot be expressed in words.

National Action on Rents: Immediately after the lifting of the three month ban on meetings, Head Office asked all Local Committees to call workers' rallies to discuss rents, wages and other matters affecting workers. Such meetings were called by the Witwatersrand, Durban, Kimberley, Cape Western Province and Port Elizabeth Local Committees and resolutions demanding the ending of criminal prosecutions and the lowering of rents were adopted and forwarded to Local Authorities.

Witwatersrand Local Committee: In Johannesburg and on the Reef, the prosecution of African tenants became a major issue and a cause of national concern, during the past year. Men and women were dragged from their beds at 3 in the morning and lodged in cells for being in arrear with their rents. At the mass meeting held by this Local Committee in July, 1961 and attended by workers from Johannesburg, Pretoria and many Reef Municipalities, the anger of the people was made very clear and it was resolved to conduct a campaign against the criminal prosecution of African tenants with the greatest possible urgency.

The Witwatersrand Local Committee has conducted a consistent campaign on this matter since this resolution was adopted. Innumerable press statements were issued, a memorandum was sent to the Johannesburg City Council and a Local Committee deputation met the Chairman of the Non-European Affairs Committee together with officials of the Non-European Affairs Department. In co-operation with the Residents' Associations of the South-western Regions of Johannesburg, individual cases were taken up with Superintendents of Townships and with the Manager of the Non-European Affairs Department and the handling of these cases resulted in summonses being withdrawn; ejectment orders stayed; extensions of time being granted for payment and so on.

This campaign revealed an outrageous state of affairs in Johannesburg. Though the City Council, at a special press conference called by it on this question, was at pains to announce that "criminal prosecution was adopted only as a last resort when all attempts to make a tenant meet his obligations had failed," our investigations proved the contrary to be the truth. The sick, the unemployed, the underpaid were being relentlessly
Incredibly savage sentences are imposed on tenants in arrears—a fine of £2 - £5 or 30 days hard labour. The tenant is given a specified time to pay off the arrears and if he does not do so, he is re-arrested and serves the full sentence of 30 days irrespective of the fact that he may have paid half or more of the arrears. We handled the case of a worker who had been ill and was in arrears to the extent of £15. After paying the fine and £9 of the arrears (in monthly instalments) he became ill again and could not pay off the remaining arrears. He was then taken out of his job and imprisoned for thirty days for 'contempt' of court.

The memorandum submitted by the Witwatersrand Local Committee to the Johannesburg City Council stated, inter alia:

"When a tenant falls into arrears he is required to pay these off and also to pay his current rent. This often works out to one-third of his wages. When rent and transport costs have been paid, what is left for food? As the results of a survey conducted by our Congress we know that the average diet of an African urban worker consists of meat once a week (on pay day), mealie-meal, tea and bread for the rest of the week. Eggs, fruit, butter and vegetables are rarely eaten. Milk is given to very small babies and then not regularly. What human being can survive, be healthy and do an adequate day's work on this diet?

The African workers believe that they are prosecuted because they are African and because of their poverty. The danger to race relations in South Africa inherent in this belief is beyond estimation.

Our Congress cannot understand what is achieved by sentencing an unemployed worker to the indescribably severe sentence of 30 days' imprisonment with hard labour for rent arrears. What is more, any tenant so jailed is liable for the rent of his house for the period he spends in jail. This system encourages illegal money lenders who prey upon the workers and lend them money at exorbitant rates of interest, sometimes as much as 100%. This system is also responsible for soaring crime rates.

We declare that African workers are as responsible as any other group of workers. They do not deliberately court arrest and imprisonment and the suffering this brings to themselves and their families. They do not want to pay fines from their meagre wages.

On the days that members of our Congress attended the Kliptown rent court as observers we discovered that the overwhelming majority of the defaulters were those who earned £3 - £4 per week. This is true, too, of 90% of the workers who seek the assistance of our Congress with regard to rent difficulties.

We claim that the African workers live in a nightmare of debt, arrest and imprisonment. The birth of a child, the death of a relative involving travelling and funeral expenses, throws out their budgets and they cannot pay their rents and feed their families."

The memorandum also asked that a flat rental be charged for each house and that rentals be reduced. In reply to the latter request, Mr. Patrick Lewis, Chairman of the Johannesburg Non-European Affairs Committee
said: "The rents may be too high for the workers to pay, but they not too high for the services received." (!)

We are pleased to report that as the result of this outstanding campaign conducted by the Witwatersrand Local Committee and also because of continued criticism of the City Council by the Residents' Association, by two former members of the City Council, Mrs. M. Mitchell and Mr. H. McCarthy (of the Progressive Party) by the Liberal Party of South Africa, by the Rand Daily Mail and the Star, the Johannesburg City Council has been forced to revise its entire system of rent collections and there is a new scheme under discussion at present. The Council has conceded that rents are too high; that if possible a flat rate for each room per house should be charged.

We may congratulate ourselves on this victory, but there are features of the new plan which give rise to the gravest mis-givings, namely, (i) that arrests and imprisonment will be continued but will be reduced to 'a minimum'. We repeat that it is morally indefensible to apply criminal sanctions to African tenants (and only to African tenants) for rent arrears. (ii) Employers will be asked to deduct up to 25% of wages as rent of a Council tenant who falls into arrears. This money will be paid direct by the employer to the Council. We have announced our absolute rejection of this scheme. Employers are not required to act as rent collectors for the Johannesburg City Council (or any other Local Authority) and workers are especially protected by law from such deductions from their wages.

In all press statements, memoranda and discussions on the question of rents and criminal prosecutions for rent arrears, the Witwatersrand Local Committee said categorically that the whole question was one of poverty wages and that when living wages are paid to African workers there will be no problem.

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**STRIKES.**

The universal trade union weapon used to improve wages and working conditions, namely, the strike weapon is either severely restricted or expressly forbidden in South Africa. In terms of the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act, African workers are expressly forbidden to strike and the following are the maximum penalties if they take such action - a fine of £500 or three years' imprisonment or three years without the option of a fine or both fine and imprisonment. Under the Criminal Laws Amendment Act, severe penalties are laid down for 'inciting' workers to strike.

A dispute, as defined in the Native (Settlement of Disputes) Act is a dispute between an employer and two or more African employees regarding employment; conditions of employment or a refusal to re-employ an African worker.

Despite these restrictions, there were 453 strikes of African workers during the period 1954 - 1960. Thousands of workers were prosecuted and have been either fined or imprisoned. The South African economy has suffered enormous losses in terms of lost man hours and lost production. The fact that workers have faced up to these severe penalties indicates that they are not deterred by the punitive legislation enacted by the State and that they are determined to put right the injustices they suffer.

In 1961 there were both economic and political strikes. SACTU Local Committees, Head Office and affiliated Unions gave assistance in the following strikes.

In August, 1961 our Durban Local Committee came to the assistance of 80 blind African workers who demanded higher wages from their employers, the Natal Bantu Blind Society. The majority of these workers earn only £10 per month and those who live out pay up to £3 per month in rent. In true South African tradition, the police were called out, all the workers were dismissed and 13 workers were victimised. The rest were re-employed, but no increase in wages was won. SACTU gave these workers press publicity, both here and abroad and issued an appeal to affiliated Unions for financial assistance.

2. King George V. Hospital, Durban.

During August, 1961, in protest against the alleged caning of 11 student nurses by a sister-tutor, the entire non-white staff of this hospital staged one of the most outstanding demonstrations witnessed in South Africa. 300 nurses staged an eight-hour walk-out and were joined by all the non-white staff, including orderlies and labourers. The African nurses also started a boycott of hospital meals until their grievances were redressed and the SACTU Durban Local Committee supplied them with food.

Prior to the demonstration, the nurses, through the Hospital Workers' Union, had been trying to negotiate for increased wages and better conditions and they now demanded that they receive a reply to their requests.

The police and armoured cars were immediately called out while the staff were demonstrating and the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner for Natal tried to interview the nurses who refused to speak to him. The following day, the Hospital Workers' Union wrote to the Medical Superintendent, Dr. Dormer, demanding that he negotiate with the Union. The latter stated: "We fail to see how the Bantu Affairs Department, which has no connection with the workers or the running of the hospital, could possibly help in settling the present dispute between the workers and the hospital authorities."

The following day, there was a further stoppage of work when 300 non-white workers demonstrated by marching to the Superintendent's office to ask for a reply. The police once again went into action and even toured the hospital wards!

Twenty nurses were dismissed during the boycott of meals which continued for two weeks. Then on 29th August, all nurses were threatened with dismissal if they did not resign from the Hospital Workers' Union within two days, namely, by 31st August, 1961. The Durban Local Committee immediately informed Head Office which wired a protest to the Superintendent of the Hospital and also called for international protests.

Overseas response: The flood of letters and telegrams of protests which poured into the office of Dr. Dormer, the Superintendent, from tradeunion bodies overseas was so overwhelming that the threatened dismissal of workers did not take place. They are still members of the Union. Unfortunately, the 20 nurses who were dismissed earlier were not re-instatement and a number of these have since emigrated to Tanganyika to display solidarity in assisting in nursing services since this country won independence.

The Department of Health issued a statement stating that the 11 nurses were not caned but were playfully tapped! One wonders what the reaction of the Department would have been had any instructor 'playfully tapped' European nurses?

3. Lion Match Company, Durban.

In March, 1961, the Match Workers' Union, a SACTU affiliate, staged a successful demonstration at the Lion Match Company. The Police and Labour Department officials tried to intervene, but the workers refused