

## WHAT CAN WE DO? (Cont.)

We must understand our African fellow-citizens' motivations, aspirations and reactions, and try to appreciate the extent to which their behaviour is the product of the frustrations to which they are subjected.

We must realize constantly that we all have a contribution to make towards an enriching relationship with one another — some by virtue of their cultural background and their knowledge; others by virtue of their vitality, cheerfulness and tolerance. And heaven knows there are many Africans who possess these qualities in rich measure.

### Challenge

The last thing we can do is to harass the enemy, and we can do it in many ways.

We can challenge and fight the equivocator who searches feverishly for some sort of ethical justification for the discrimination which he practises. I can live with the man who admits quite frankly that there is no moral justification for the doctrine of White supremacy that he espouses, but I cannot abide the person who silences his conscience and persuades himself that it is perfectly ethical to maintain the White man's privilege.

We can fight the sections of the Press that studiously avoid the use of the term "African" or cannot bring themselves to prefixing the word "Mister" to an African's name.

We can fight the individual who feels that he demeans himself by shaking hands with an African or regards a well-dressed African as an affront to the White man.

We can fight the patronage one so frequently encounters among people who say "look how well I treat my servants" and then believe with the greatest smugness that they have discharged their duties in the race relations field.

These things we can do and more besides. If we fail to do them we must accept the possibility of falling into a state of moral decay.

You see, so many of us seem to feel that race relations in South Africa are a political issue and are subject as such to a rather special set of rules. They are political issues, it is true, but even more are they moral issues. Unless we accept this fact and are prepared to place our laws and our practices on the firm ground of fair dealing, we must be prepared to sink deeper and deeper into the morass that constantly threatens to engulf us.

## AFRICAN WAGES

**S**OUTH AFRICA is surely the only country in the world which imports two-thirds of the unskilled labour required in its major industry.

Africans in the Republic will remain reluctant to work in the mines until wages and conditions are improved.

The present low wages are due to two main factors. The first is the belief that the Native reserves can be relied on to subsidize the wages paid to Africans. Yet everyone who has looked into the question knows how poverty-stricken the reserves really are and how hard and costly it is to reconstruct them.

Years ago the Lansdown Commission declared that "the combined income of the mine worker from his wages and his allotment of land in the reserves should be such as to provide him with a proper livelihood, to enable him to maintain family life and tribal association, good health and the control of his land".

To this day, however, mine wages, plus income produced in the reserves, are far from giving Africans a decent minimum standard of living.

The second factor which keeps wages low is the opposition of the mine owners to trade unionism. It is rather late in human history to have to reassure the fearful that trade unions are not dangerous radical organizations determined to destroy the industry which employs them, and that Africans in industry are not as primitive and irresponsible as Europeans are inclined to imagine.

But perhaps I may be allowed to recall that 20 years ago when a trade union for African miners on the copperbelt of Northern Rhodesia was first advocated, men of experience said to me, with a patronizing smile, that it would take 100 years to come. In fact, however, it took less than ten years for an African trade union to come — and to become a respectable and rather conservative body accepted on all sides. Nor did its coming ruin the copper mines.

Only when Africans are granted the universal human right of collective bargaining (which all European workmen can exercise) will the question of wages be determined in the way it should be, which is by full consideration of all the issues by all concerned.

*(From the "RAND DAILY MAIL", August 31st, 1961: extract from a letter by Professor Julius Lewin of the University of the Witwatersrand, commenting on the editorial of August 28th, which discussed the Minister of Mines' proposal that the mines should become less dependent on African labour brought in from other territories.)*