

Chapter Eight

BLACK WORKERS

Introduction

ALTHOUGH THIS CHAPTER deals with all black workers, in this introduction we will concentrate on African workers and their organisational problems, particularly because they are 'legally' defined differently.

African workers are affected by various laws which prohibit them from normal participation in the economic life of the country. Among these laws are the Influx Control laws, which are designed to curtail and control the movement of Africans from the rural to urban areas and also between urban areas. Thus African workers cannot sell their labour to the highest bidder. These laws also lay down stringent conditions for qualifications to reside in urban areas and thousands of Africans are prosecuted every week for contravening these laws.

Thousands of workers are recruited through 'Bantu' labour bureaux from the 'homelands' and rural areas through a contract system. Such contracts are signed between the worker and the prospective employer through the Department of 'Bantu' Administration and Development or 'homeland' authority. The contract has to be renewed every year. Workers recruited in this fashion are forbidden to stay with their families in the urban areas and they are housed in compounds and 'single' men's and women's hostels. They are generally referred to as 'migratory' workers.

The Industrial Conciliation Act, designed to control and regulate relations between employers and employees, and for the prevention and

settlement of industrial disputes, excludes Africans from the definition of an 'employee'. The effect is that Africans are deprived of membership of registered trade unions and cannot bargain with employers about their wages and working conditions like other workers.

The 'Bantu' Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act of 1953 as amended in 1955 also defined the term 'employee' to exclude all Africans. It prohibits strikes and lock-outs of African workers and the instigation or incitement towards strikes. It provides for the establishment of works committees, 'Bantu' regional labour committees whose chairmen are 'Bantu' labour officers (whites) and a 'Bantu' Labour Board (consisting of whites). Members and officials of the 'Bantu' Labour Board attend Industrial Council meetings and negotiations as well as Wage Board hearings to 'represent' the interests of African workers. They are also entrusted with the handling of labour disputes. This Act also prevents the collection of trade union fees from Africans through stop orders by employers.

The Wage Act is operative in most industries not covered by Industrial Council agreements (some of whose provisions are extended to cover Africans by the Minister of Labour) but wages laid down by the Wage Board are usually below R10 per week for unskilled workers. African unions or interested parties are allowed to make representations at Wage Board hearings. But the Wage Board determinations are often reviewed only after long periods - ranging between three and seven years.

One of the most vicious laws operating in South Africa is the Masters and Servants Act which applies to domestic workers and farm labourers. This law effectively binds black workers to their employers under pain of prosecution if they 'desert' their employment. Thousands of workers are shackled to their masters by this law.

For the millions of black workers in the so-called 'homelands' who cannot find contract labour in the mines and industrial centres, border industries exist on the doorsteps of their residential areas. No laws laying down wages and working conditions operate in these areas; wages range from R3 to R10 per week; trade unions do not exist and the Physical Planning and Utilisation of Resources Act of 1967 prohibits the establishment of a new industry in the metropolitan areas if it is practicable for such an industry to be sited in a border industry. The wage scales in the latter areas are usually 5 times lower than in the urban areas.

Apart from this law there is the Bantu Laws Amendment Act which empowers the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development to prohibit the performance of work by, or the employment or continued employment of African workers in specified areas, specified classes of employment, trade or in the service of a specified employer or class of employers.

Added to this are the job reservation determinations barring Africans from certain categories of work in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act and the Mines and Works Act. Africans are also debarred from apprenticeship in most industries except building and then only in order to work in 'Bantu' areas at rates of pay far lower than those applicable to whites.

Faced with this myriad of repressive laws and a host of other disabilities like standards of education, low wages, poor housing and inadequate transport, African workers have consistently struggled to organise themselves into trade unions, with all the odds against them.

The history of trade unionism among Africans stretches back to the days of the Industrial and Commercial Union (ICU) which was founded in 1918 by Mr Clemens Kadalie, and which claimed 50 000 members at its height in 1925.

More trade unions and co-ordinating bodies came and went, most important among them being the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), whose leaders were harassed and rendered ineffective through banning, imprisonment and banishment and the Federation of Free African Trade Unions of South Africa (FOFATUSA) which has also gone out of existence.

Prior to this was the 'Non-European' Trade Union Federation, the Joint Committee of African Trade Unions and the Council of 'Non-European' Trade Unions, all of which had thousands of members at the peak of their strength.

A few African trade unions still exist, some of the most notable being the National Union of Clothing Workers of South Africa (a past affiliate of SACTU, FOFATUSA and even TUCSA), and the Engineering, Metal and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa. This union also used to be affiliated to TUCSA until the adoption of TUCSA's non-African membership policy in 1969. The National Union of Clothing Workers has a paid-up membership of about 17 000. The Engineering Union has not increased its membership for a long time, and it remains at approximately 400. The former enjoys the support of its counterpart white unions, whereas the latter does not.

Other smaller unions have been struggling for existence in the leather, glass, motor, tobacco, laundry and dry cleaning trades, as well as in the textile, chemical and retail trades. But a resurgence of trade union activity in many other industries is evident though white trade unions and government circles are not expected to welcome nor to encourage an independent, vital and vigorous trade union movement among Africans. Nevertheless unrest is growing among all ranks of black workers and a greater realisation of their strength and the need for solidarity is manifesting itself increasingly.

Statistics on the Employment Situation of Black Workers

The following information on the employment situation of black workers was extracted from the Bulletin of Statistics, December, 1972, released by the Department of Statistics. The information relates to the estimated number of Coloureds, Indians and Africans employed in the various trades. These figures are monthly averages and are based on the average number of workers during June 1972.

	Coloureds	Asians	Africans	Total
Mining and quarrying	6 944	555	560 219	567 718
Manufacturing	203 800	77 300	662 400	943 500
Construction	46 900	5 600	275 100	327 600
Electricity (private establishment and ESCOM)	600		16 300	16 900
Laundries and Dry Cleaning Services	4 000	1 200	13 000	18 200
Control Boards	80	-	497	577
Licensed Accommodation establishments	6 300	5 400	32 200	43 900
Wholesale trade	19 900	9 700	81 700	111 300
Retail trade	31 500	16 600	111 500	159 600
Motor trade	10 200	2 900	50 100	63 200
Insurance companies	2 826	642	3 820	7 288
Banking Institutions	1 353	351	5 205	6 909
Building Societies	278	119	1 572	1 969
Transport: S.A. Railways and Harbours	15 855	1 279	99 521	116 655
Communications: Post, Telegraphs and Telephones	2 017	521	5 288	7 826
Post Office: Engineering division	2 207	56	9 392	11 655
Central Government	32 648	7 816	128 677	169 141
Provincial Administration	14 523	2 310	83 194	100 027
Local Authorities	18 800	3 900	121 400	144 100
Trading Departments	3 900	500	32 400	36 800
Universities	1 609	453	5 103	7 265

The Building Trade

Replying to a question in Parliament on 14 February, 1972, the Minister of Labour disclosed statistics relating to the number of people in each race group employed in the building trade during 1971 (1):

Whites	23 532
Coloureds	37 384
Asiatics	10 096
Africans	123 810

According to the Minister, the available figures relate only to areas covered by Industrial Council agreements and have been extracted from statistics submitted by the Industrial Councils as at the time of publication of their agreements.

On the question of African workers in the building trade, the Minister of Labour on 25 February, 1972, informed Parliament that 5481 Africans had completed training under the Bantu Building Workers Act at the end of 1971 (2). The numbers of Africans who qualified in various building trades are given below:

Blocklaying	74
Bricklaying	2 817
Bricklaying and plastering	338
Carpentry	1 060
Carpentry and Joinery	54
Electrical wiring	23
Joinery	1
Painting	338
Plastering	334
Plumbing	382
TOTAL	5 421

The Minister further informed the House that 1010 apprenticeship contracts in respect of Coloureds, and 397 contracts in respect of Asiatics, in the building trade, were registered during 1971 (3).

South African Railways and Harbours

The following information, in connection with the number of Whites, Coloureds, Asiatics and Africans respectively, employed in harbour services during 1971, was given by the Minister of Transport in Parliament on 15 February, 1972 (4).

	Whites	Indians	Coloureds	Africans
Durban	2 783	492	6	5 100
East London	1 202	-	6	810
Port Elizabeth	1 874	-	218	1 086
Cape Town	3 357	-	756	1 639

Present staff shortage in respect of each race group:

	Whites	'Non-Whites'
Durban	1 026	-
East London	42	24
Port Elizabeth	208	64
Cape Town	465	50
	1 741	138

The statistics on workers employed by the Railway Administration in connection with railways, harbours, airways and pipelines were given by the Minister of Transport on 9 March, 1972 (5):

	Whites	Coloureds	Indians	Africans
Railways	97 050	14 121	909	89 006
Harbours	9 312	1 134	492	8 698
Airways	5 951	None	133	1 188
Pipelines	145	None	None	221

The Minister also gave statistics on the number of Coloureds, Asians and Africans respectively who were temporarily employed on work normally performed by white-graded staff.

	Number	Minimum wage per day	Maximum wage per day
Coloureds	261	R2,25	R4,79
Indians	142	R1,70	R4,79
Africans	1 912	R1,60	R4,03

The figures of 'non-whites' performing work formerly done by unskilled and ungraded white workers are as follows:

	Number	Minimum wage per day	Maximum wage per day
Coloureds	156	R1,95	R2,70
Indians	None	R1,50	R2,00
Africans	400	R1,40	R1,90

The Minister stated that this information was determined as at 31 January, 1972.

According to the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, 96 642 Africans were employed by the South African Railways and Harbours during 1971 in accordance with regulations in terms of the Bantu Labour Act (6).

Department of Post and Telegraphs

Replying to a question in Parliament on 21 March, 1972, the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs said that 200 Coloured, 208 Indian and 439 African postmen were, as at 31 December, 1971, employed in posts for whites because whites were not available to do the job (7).

He further disclosed that there were 700 Coloured, 86 Indian and 193 Africans in other posts. The latter figures, he said, related to people employed in authorised posts of postmen for the respective racial groups.

Regarding the administrative division of the Department of Posts and Telegraphs, there are, according to the information given by the Minister,

4 Indians, 5 Coloureds and 23 Africans employed in this division (8). The table below reflects the capacities in which they are employed and their salaries.

Capacity in which they are employed	No. in each capacity	Highest salary or wage scale	Lowest salary or wage scale
Indians			
Postmaster Grade III	1	R4 320	R3 840
Postmaster Grade IV	3	R3 720	R3 240
Coloureds			
Postmaster Grade III	2	R4 320	R3 840
Postmaster Grade IV	3	R3 720	R3 240
Africans			
Postmaster Grade III	3	R3 240	R2 880
Postmaster Grade IV	19	R2 790	R2 430
Superintendent	1	R2 790	R2 430

Contracts of Apprenticeship registered

During 1971, 1 596 Coloureds and 604 Asiatics were registered as apprentices in terms of the Apprenticeship Act (9).

The specific trades to which these contracts relate were given by the

Minister on 25 February, 1972. These stand as follows:

	Coloured	Asiatics
Building	1 010	397
Printing	74	11
Hairdressing	-	1
Jewellers and Goldsmiths	6	-
Metal (Engineering)	135	18
Furniture	196	83
Motor	161	89
Government undertakings	12	-
Sugar manufacturing and refinery	2	5
	1 596	604

Unemployment

Information on unemployment in respect of Coloureds and Indians was given by the Minister of Labour on 25 February, 1972 (10). The Minister stated that in all the inspectorate areas, there were 2 423 Coloureds and 1 624 Indians registered as unemployed at the end of 1971. The breakdown on these figures is:

	Coloureds	Indians
Johannesburg	274	44
Cape Town	751	1
Durban	350	1 542
Pretoria	73	22
Port Elizabeth	408	1
Bloemfontein	55	-
East London	164	11
Kimberley	320	3
George	28	-
Windhoek	-	-
	2 423	1 624

The 2 423 Coloureds and 1 624 Indians were registered in employment categories reflected below:

	Coloureds	Indians
Administrative and clerical	108	308
Commercial	74	144
Skilled trades	264	138
Services	147	54
Transport	117	125
Operative and semi-skilled work	726	569
Unskilled	982	280
Other occupational categories	13	6
	2 431	1 624

Some Incidents amongst Workers

Recent developments in the labour sector indicate that the black worker is increasingly becoming impatient with South Africa's discriminatory labour laws. Lack of proper machinery, such as trade unions, led the workers to seek and act upon whatever remedial methods they deemed fit in order to have their voice heard and their grievances redressed. This can be illustrated by some of the notable incidents which occurred during 1972.

The PUTCO Bus Drivers' Strike

A number of PUTCO (Public Utilities Transport Company) bus drivers from Faraday, Ikhwezi, Kliptown and Martindale depots held a meeting with the management at the Faraday Depot on 2 June, 1972, and demanded an increase in their wages. The starting wage for drivers was R27,26 and it reached a maximum of R36,77 after 26 years of service. If a bus inspector found a passenger without a ticket, R5 was taken off the driver's wages for 26 weeks (11).

The drivers demanded R60 per week and this demand, according to Mr T.H. Frith, managing director of PUTCO, was totally ridiculous, unrealistic and unjustified and therefore could not be met (12). When the management failed to satisfy the demands of the drivers, one driver stood up and announced that as from that moment, the drivers were on strike. The PUTCO officials took this lightly stating that such a thing had never happened in the history of PUTCO.

The drivers then posted some men at the entrances and no buses were allowed to leave the depot. By three o'clock in the afternoon there were no more buses travelling, except a few from the Alexandra, Pretoria and Edenvale depots. Meanwhile the number of drivers at the Faraday depot had swelled to more than 300, and at 6 pm the drivers dispersed after agreeing to return the following morning.

On Saturday 3 June, 1972, the strike spread to all depots, except Pretoria. The drivers from Faraday, Ikhwezi, Martindale and Kliptown, and a few from Evaton had reassembled at Faraday. At about 10 am police swooped on the strikers and arrested more than 300 men and took them to John Vorster Square, Johannesburg. Other drivers who had arrived later with the intention of attending the strikers' meeting demanded to be detained as well. Relatives of the arrested drivers were refused permission to bring the prisoners clothes and food. In the meantime PUTCO officials, Labour Department officials and the police started negotiating with the other drivers and appealed to them to abandon their

demands. This appeal by officials fell on deaf ears.

On Sunday, dozens of the striking drivers in a demonstration of solidarity with their 308 arrested colleagues arrived at John Vorster Square at various times and asked to be locked up (13).

The drivers said that they were off-duty on Saturday when their colleagues were arrested. 'We want to be with our brothers', said one driver, 'We asked the police to lock us up, but they would not. They said they did not know what to charge us with'. Reacting to Mr Frith's threat that if the drivers did not go back to work they would be fired, the drivers retorted: 'He can fire us, we are fighting for our rights'. The drivers held on up to Sunday night.

On Monday morning, 5 June, 1972, PUTCO officials, with members of the South African Police, raided the private hostels (rented by PUTCO for their workers) in Alexandra and Thembisa townships, and forced drivers back to work. Others were rounded up from their homes and hordes of police were stationed at bus stops and police cars patrolled the bus routes after the buses had started operating.

At about 8 am crowds of wives, relatives and friends of the arrested drivers started gathering at John Vorster Square. These people, who at one stage numbered about 500, stood there the whole day without food and police vans and riot trucks waited nearby.

At 1 pm Mr T.H. Frith announced that the strike was over and that the drivers would be released. About 100 policemen crowded the entrance to John Vorster Square as the last batch of drivers was released at 8 pm, the first batch having been released at about 6.15 pm.

The drivers had, however, been charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act and were out on bail of R5 which was paid by PUTCO. The released drivers were scheduled to appear in batches in the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court on 3, 10, 17, and 24 August, 1972. All charges were subsequently withdrawn against the drivers. Three drivers failed to appear at the last hearing and warrants of arrest were issued against them for contempt of court.

Results of the strike

The strike affected about 120 000 commuters and cost PUTCO between R40 000 and R45 000 per day (14). Factories throughout Johannesburg nearly closed as a result of this strike.

On 9 September, 1972, Mr T.H. Frith announced that an increase for PUTCO drivers and all its black staff, would cost the company R1 500 000 in the next year. This increase became effective as from September 6.

Starting wages for new drivers were lifted from R27,26 to R35 a week

and the ceiling was lifted from R36,77 to a flat R45 a week. Drivers would reach the maximum rate after 10 years instead of 26 years.

The pay rise for PUTCO men followed a fare increase at the beginning of September. The people who were hardest-hit were the people using the Johannesburg-Evaton route. These people paid, as a result of the fare increase, 40c instead of 25c per single trip. Commenting on the fare increase, Mr T.H. Frith said: 'We are not being unkind. People must understand that the price of oil, petrol, spares and tyres has gone up. My staff need increases too'.

The most significant result of the PUTCO bus drivers' strike can, perhaps, be seen in the decision by the drivers to form a trade union. The move to establish a trade union by a group of drivers was motivated by the realisation of their insecurity as workers and the lack of proper machinery that would make representation to the management on their behalf.

According to Mr John Nhlapo, chairman of the drivers' committee that was formed in May, the news of their intention to form a union was not received happily by PUTCO management. He and several members of the committee were summoned before Mr A. Carleo, a director and major shareholder in PUTCO, and told that unless they abandoned this idea, they and about 40 others would be fired (15). Mr Carleo subsequently denied this allegation to newspaper reporters. The drivers had meanwhile sought legal advice and established that such an act by an employer constituted a lock-out and was forbidden by law. They therefore resolved to proceed with the formation of a trade union.

In addition to a union, the drivers decided to apply for the establishment of a statutory works committee through which the union leaders could put their case to the management with the help of the Department of Labour.

The Dockworkers Strike

On 23 October, 1972, more than 2 000 African stevedores in Durban went on strike for higher wages and better working conditions. This strike brought work in the harbour virtually to a standstill as 20 ships lay idle.

The strike was precipitated by a new five-day working week that had been introduced a week earlier. On the 23 October more than 2 000 workers crowded the street outside their employers' offices, the Durban Stevedoring Labour Supply Company in Southampton Street, and demanded an opportunity to air their grievances.

Amongst other grievances, they claimed that:

1. Their basic wage of R8,40 per week was not enough.
2. Their new working hours were too long. They worked twelve and a half hours per day with only a break for lunch between 12.30 pm. and 1.30 pm.
3. They did not know how much was deducted from their wages each week for income tax and compound fees as they did not get pay slips.
4. Many of them had to work 7 days a week for months on end without a full day's break.
5. They received only R6 leave pay per year.

The stevedores demanded a minimum basic wage of R18,50 per week.

The manager of the Durban Stevedoring Labour Supply, Mr W.S. Dreyer, addressed the angry workers and appealed to them to return to their jobs. The workers fired questions at him and amongst other things they demanded to know were:

why it was taking the Wage Board so long to decide on their wages since it had heard evidence on salaries in July, 1972;

why the salaries had not been increased when working hours were lengthened;

why their pay envelopes did not contain pay slips.

After failing to be convinced by Mr Dreyer's replies, the workers refused to return to their jobs. On the second day of the strike, the workers were told by Mr Dreyer that his company could not accede to their demands and that a new wage determination was being considered by the Wage Board. He gave them the ultimatum that they either return to work immediately or collect the pay owing to them and leave. A large contingent of police stood by watching the situation very closely. Fourteen men chose to collect their pay and belongings and leave. A railway bus provided by the company took them to the Durban station.

Within a period of two weeks after the strike, more than 15 stevedores were dismissed by the Stevedoring Labour Supply Company. The men told the *Natal Mercury* that their dismissal was directly connected with their having given evidence at the Wage Board hearing. This was denied by a spokesman for the Company.

Expulsion of Workers from a Benoni factory

On 26 October, 1972, a Benoni textile factory, Fibres, Spinners and Weavers (Pty.) Ltd., fired more than hundred-and-fifty (150) of its workers.

According to one of the men Mr Joseph Matsobane, this expulsion was the result of the workers refusing to work longer hours. Mr Matsobane informed the press that workers used to get R13,00 a week for working from 7.15 am - 4.30 pm. In June 1972, the workers asked for more wages and in mid-October, 1972, they were granted an increase of R1,30 but a change was introduced in the working hours. The workers were told that they would have to work from 6 am - 6 pm.

Several hundred workers refused to work the extra hours but most of them were 'persuaded' to do so by the factory officials. More than 150 workers were, however, adamant in their resolve not to work for twelve (12) hours.

The result was that the factory decided to fire more than 150 of its employees. The workers preferred to lose their jobs rather than be forced to work for twelve (12) hours a day.

The factory manager declined to comment on this matter. He would neither confirm nor deny the workers' allegation. All he would say was 'we've had no trouble. And there's no comment'.

The Cape Town Stevedores' Walk-out Protest

At 5 pm on 24 October, 2 000 stevedores in Cape Town harbour downed their tools and quietly went home. This was the beginning of their 'stop-at-five' protest which was to last for thirty-one (31) days. The workers were dissatisfied because their new system of work which had recently been introduced shortened their overtime by an hour a day and they claimed their pay was reduced, and there was no break between normal working hours and overtime. From lunch at 1.00 pm they had to work up to 8 pm. Overtime on Saturdays was done away with (16). The mass walk-out by the Coloured and African stevedores halted all loading and unloading of cargo. Crane drivers and fork-lift truck operators and other harbour staff had to call it a day and go home.

Meetings were held between government officials with representatives of the stevedoring firms and leaders of the 2 000 strong stevedoring labour force. These meetings proved, however, fruitless as the stevedores were adamant that they would not work later than 5 pm.

On the 27 October, Captain F. Cobb, chairman of the Cape Town Stevedores' Association (an organisation of stevedoring firms employing the dockworkers) gave the dockworkers an ultimatum that they either return to normal working hours or employers would have to review the

situation and take drastic action. Normal working hours meant 7.30 am to 12.30 pm, lunch from 12.30 to 1.30 and then work again until 5.30 pm. Overtime was from 5.30 pm. - 8 pm. By 1 November, some dockworkers had started to work until 8 pm. but hundreds of them still held on to the 'stop-at-five' campaign (17).

After exactly thirty-one (31) days the 2 000 - strong force of workers decided to return to normal overtime at the Cape Town docks. It appeared that the dockworkers had been made aware, through press reports, of the suggested increases in their wages by the Wage Board and as a result indicated a willingness to negotiate.

The Diamond Mine Strike

The Sover Diamond Mine near Windsorton was a scene of unrest on 25, October, 1972 when 142 miners downed their tools. The miners stopped working because they were dissatisfied with their bonus payments. They demanded more attractive bonus payments and the resignation of the mine manager, Mr P.J. Nel. They also demanded the cancellation of their contracts.

Despite repeated appeals by the mine authorities to go back to their jobs, the miners held on to their strike and on 27 October, police walked onto the scene and arrested twenty (20) workers. The compound manager Mr P.I. Swanepoel later claimed that these twenty workers were the main trouble-makers.

On 6 November, 1972 the twenty miners appeared in the Barkly West Magistrate's Court and were convicted. They were all sentenced to eighty (80) days' imprisonment each. Their contracts were cancelled and after serving their sentences, they would be repatriated to Mozambique.

The African Bus Services Strike

About 200 drivers employed by the African Bus Services stopped work on 5 December, 1972. Trouble started when the drivers demanded that an inspector of the Company, who had been involved with a driver in a fight, be dismissed.

On 21 December, the same problem arose at the Company's Boom Street depot. About 150 bus drivers stopped work. The drivers demanded the immediate dismissal of an inspector. The men were addressed by the Department of Labour officials as well as by the District Commandant of Police, Colonel Buurman van Zyl, and the head of the Flying Squad, Lieutenant-Colonel A.J. Wandrag.

About 100 drivers returned to their posts. When the rest refused to do so, 57 drivers were arrested under the Riotous Assemblies Act. They were

taken to a police station in three car loads.

By December, 1972, the case was still proceeding.

The Soweto Doctors' walk-out Protest

During October 1972, ten African doctors employed by the Johannesburg City Council in Soweto clinics, without warning staged a walk-out protest against low salaries.

The doctors were being paid R1,30 per hour, as opposed to their white counterparts who received R4,98 per hour. The African doctors maintained that they would not return to their jobs unless they received equal pay with whites. On 30 October, Mr Monty Sklaar, Chairman of the Council's Health Amenities, after a special meeting, announced that black doctors would be paid the same as white doctors. Needless to say, this move by the black doctors had dealt a crippling blow to the City Council's health services in Soweto.

General

The protests by black workers quoted above should not be construed as the only protests. Perhaps to get a better view of the picture, statistics on strikes and work stoppages, given by the Minister of Labour in Parliament on 13 April, should be considered (18).

The Minister disclosed that during 1970, 28 strikes by Africans occurred, 10 of which were caused by dissatisfaction with wages. During the same year, there were 35 work stoppages involving Africans.

During 1971 there were, according to the Minister, 22 strikes and 42 work stoppages involving Africans. It is significant that 8 of these strikes were caused by dissatisfaction with wages.

Further information on the question of strikes by blacks was given by the Minister of Police in Parliament on 26 May, 1972. According to the Minister, during 1970, 70 Africans were arrested for striking and during 1971, 250 Africans were arrested.

According to the Minister of Justice (Parliament 2.6.72) the Department of Statistics gave the following information: during 1969-1970, 34 Africans were charged with illegal strikes and related conduct, and only 1 African was convicted. During 1970-1971, 2 Africans were charged with similar charges and both of them were convicted.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN BLACK LABOUR ORGANISATION

The Black Workers' Project

The Black Workers' Project emanates from a resolution which was taken at the 3rd General Students' Council of SASO at Hammanskraal in

July, 1972. This resolution was born out of the realisation of the plight of the black worker who, although constituting almost 80% of the labour force in South Africa, was open to exploitation by employers because of his lack of proper machinery to cater for his interests.

Thus the resolution mandated the Permanent Organiser of SASO to look into the effectiveness of establishing a Black Workers' Council. In line with this resolution, an agency called the Black Workers' Project was established to work towards the establishment of this council, the purpose of which would be, as succinctly described in the relevant SASO resolution:

to act as a co-ordinating body to serve the needs and aspirations of the black workers;

to unite and bring about solidarity of black workers;

to conscientise them about their role and obligation toward the black development;

to run clinics for leadership, in-service training and imbue them with pride and self-confidence as people and about their potential as workers.

The Black Community Programmes, also realising the dire need for the establishment of a council of this nature, undertook to co-sponsor this project. The project is thus run jointly by seconded staff people from SASO and Black Community Programmes.

The modus operandi used by the Black Workers' Project is to identify trade unions (that have anything to do with black workers), approach them, establish new trade unions wherever necessary and meet employers. All this is done with a view to establishing a council by June 1973. It is envisaged that this council will be much wider in scope than a trade union, although organisation will stem from the formation of industrial unions.

Once established, the envisaged council will concern itself with all areas of the black workers' existence. A few examples of intended projects are: collective bargaining in matters relating to the workers' wages, hours, benefits and protest against ill-treatment and prejudice; in-service training to improve the skills of workers; literacy programmes in conjunction with voluntary student groups to enable the worker to read simple documents and thus understand his situation better;

conscientisation programmes through seminars on leadership and dissemination of material on workers' rights and responsibilities; recreation facilities and culture; representations could be made about problems facing the worker, e.g. housing, transportation, etc. A counselling service will be established to advise the worker on legal matters, health education etc. Benefits include W.C.A., sick fund, co-operative discounts, travel discounts, funeral benefits and a social welfare service for the workers and their families.

According to a report on B.W.P. which covered its progress since it was incepted on 1 September, 1972, the two field workers were mainly concerned with organisational work. Contact was established with leaders of existing trade unions dealing with blacks. These include inter alia the National Union of Clothing Workers, the Engineering and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa, and the African Laundry Workers' Union (a Coloured union). The responses from these unions to the Black Workers Council proposal varied between indifference and enthusiastic acceptance.

A number of unions with a Coloured/Asiatic membership have also been approached and some have indicated their willingness to involve themselves with the organising of African unions. Some of them are affiliated to the Trade Union Council of South Africa (which expelled its African affiliates in 1969) but none have definitely committed themselves to a Black Workers Council 'whilst still with TUCSA'. Most have adopted a 'wait-and-see' attitude.

Weekly lectures on trade unionism and industrial legislation are conducted at the BWP's offices and a reference library covering wages and working conditions relating to most industries has been compiled.

According to this report, contact has also been established with workers from various industries with a view to having them establish either unions or workers' associations or committees, and indications are that about seven unions are going to be formed in the first quarter of 1973.

The Black Workers' Project operates from an independent office in Johannesburg. Originally there were two field-workers in charge of this office, viz. Mr Bokwe Mafuna from Black Community Programmes and Mr Mthuli Shezi from SASO. Mr Mthuli Shezi has since died in the struggle for the liberation of black people (see Chapter 1, BPC).

The Black Allied Workers' Union

The Black Allied Workers' Union was founded on the 27 August, 1972, at the St. Johns Berchman R.C. Mission Hall, Orlando East, Johannesburg.

Its establishment followed a meeting of workers on that day at the

same place called by Mr Drake Koka, Secretary of the Sales and Allied Workers' Association (S.A.) founded in June, 1971. The general workers' meeting in Orlando East mandated the Sales and Allied Workers' Association to found an 'UMBRELLA TRADE UNION that would cater for and embrace all workers in various job categories (crafts) - the Black Allied Workers Union'. The Sales and Allied Workers' Association then passed a resolution accepting the mandate and thus BAWU was born.

The Black Allied Workers Union includes, as its aims, the following:

to organise and unite all black workers into a powerful labour force that would earn the respect and de facto recognition by both employers and government;

to consult existing black trade unions to effect the calling of a 'Black Workers' Conference' where the Black Workers' Council shall be elected;

to improve the workers' knowledge through general and specialised (occupational) educational programmes, thus bettering workers' skills and know-how by conducting:

- (a) leadership courses,
- (b) labour seminars,
- (c) lectures and specialised commercial courses;

to be spokesman for black workers in any matters that affect them in the work field.

In the budget drafted by the Sales and Allied Workers' Association for the Black Allied Workers' Union, it is estimated that R30,000 per annum would be required for its sound administration. Letters of appeal for financial assistance have been sent to various individuals and organisations. It is also hoped that through an intensive membership drive a substantial amount of money could be received from subscription fees.

Activities since establishment

A survey of trade unions was carried out by means of a questionnaire which was prepared by the Sales and Allied Workers' Association. A

pamphlet explaining the black workers' situation and giving a rationale for BAWU was also prepared and circulated. Contact was established with various trade unionists and an attempt towards gaining a large membership is also being made. Lunch-hour meetings are held at the Sales and Allied Offices at which lectures on trade unionism are given by Mr Drake Koka.

BAWU operates from an office in Johannesburg. Mr D. Koka, the head of BAWU, is the secretary general of a seven-man executive. BAWU also has a consultative Planning Committee consisting of seven men, including people like Messrs. M.T. Moerane, L.B. Mehlomakhulu and Tekane.

The Black Travellers' Association

The 'non-white' Travellers' Association was founded on 18 June, 1972, at the Planet Hotel. This was a result of the realisation by commercial travellers and salesmen of the need to unite and found a body through which they could speak from an official platform.

The aims of this organisation are:

to unite and be a body that can speak with one accord, to be able to assist the traveller in everything that affects his life;

the association will also encourage travellers to study and be qualified salesmen.

The association recently changed its name by discarding the term 'non-white' and substituting 'black' in its stead. A branch of the association was established in Pretoria. It is the intention of the association to establish branches in all the major cities in the country. The Johannesburg-based club anticipates joining forces with the African National Chamber of Commerce.

On 14 November, 1972, the travellers held a fund-raising braaivleis at the home of W. Tshabalala in Soweto.

The five-man executive is headed by Mr M.J. Kumalo, who is chairman and organiser. Other members of the executive include Mr S. Makhere, Secretary, and Mr J. Tshabalala, Treasurer.

REACTION FROM WHITES

It is perhaps at this stage essential to determine the attitude of whites, both in and out of the country, towards this explosive labour question

and how they hope to solve this problem, because their decision will to a lesser or greater extent affect the black workers.

The International Metal Workers' Federation

After a study tour of the labour situation in South Africa early in 1972, the International Metal Workers' Federation, on 22 October, 1972, released a 39 page report, which stated that the IMF:

rejected the idea of segregated African trade unions but concluded that under present laws in South Africa, it was possible to establish unions for Africans;

charged the existing trade unions with the task of getting such unions established.

The report also urged the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA) to re-establish a co-ordinating office for the organisation of black workers, like the one they had until 1968; that this office should help unions affiliated to TUCSA to organise blacks and intervene where the individual unions did not undertake such efforts. The report further warned of a revolt if the legal, political and economic situation of the black worker in South Africa did not change.

TUCSA

The general secretary of TUCSA, Mr Arthur Grobbelaar, said that the IMF report was moderate and should be welcomed with relief by trade unions and the government. He said that the consequences could have been serious had the IMF decided instead on a get-tough policy on South Africa. On 14 April, the Vice-President of TUCSA, Miss Anna Scheepers, had warned that withholding trade union and collective bargaining rights from African workers would eventually precipitate labour unrest in South Africa.

CMBU

Six unions belonging to the Confederation of Metal and Building Unions, which is affiliated to IMF, have accepted the IMF's report. Mick McCann, chairman of the CMBU, said that the CMBU would endeavour to carry out the recommendations.

Support for the view that blacks be organised into a union also came from the Building Industries Federation of S.A. (BIFSA). An editorial in

The South African Builder, an official magazine of BIFSA, said that BIFSA would 'not stand in the way of qualified recognition of 'Bantu' trade unions'.

The Federation denounced the argument that the effective operation of the 'Bantu' Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act was good reason to deny black workers the right of self-expression through trade unions. The Federation, however, expressed doubt on whether the black labour force was equipped in all respects for its emergence at present to full participation in industrial self-government.

Government

The attitude of the government to this topical subject is cut-and-dried. The Minister of Labour, Mr Marais Viljoen said in *Vereeniging* on 17 October, 1972, that the government would not allow either full membership or affiliated membership of blacks in trade unions.

Reacting to the recent unrest amongst black workers, Mr Allister Sparks, assistant editor of the *Rand Daily Mail*, made certain observations. In his column on 4 November, 1972, entitled 'Coming Power of the Black Workers', Mr Sparks viewed the recent developments as signals of a new form of pressure. He concluded by stating that this new pressure on South Africa 'will not come from abroad this time but from within; not from whites but from blacks. It will not be temporary this time but will go on growing irresistibly, slowly at first then rapidly later. And as it does so the processes of change will begin to move again'.

REFERENCES

1. Hansard 3, Col. 181.
2. Hansard 4, Col. 352.
3. Hansard 4, Col. 351.
4. Hansard 3, Col. 215.
5. Hansard 6, Col. 501.
6. Hansard 4, Col. 341.
7. Hansard 8, Col. 644.
8. Hansard 2, Col. 175.
9. Hansard 4, Col. 351.
10. Hansard 4, Col. 368.
11. *The Star*, 12 September, 1972.
12. *The Rand Daily Mail*, 5 June, 1972.
13. *The Rand Daily Mail*, 5 June, 1972.
14. *The Rand Daily Mail*, 3 June, 1972.
15. *The Rand Daily Mail*, 24 November, 1972.
16. *The Rand Daily Mail*, 31 October, 1972.
17. *The Rand Daily Mail*, 2 November, 1972.
18. Hansard 10, Col. 814.
19. Hansard 17, Col. 1137.