

WORKERS!

This is your workers' newspaper - the first but not the last of 1974. It will appear once a month, regularly - watch out for it!

But remember it is your newspaper - make sure that it says what you want it to say, that it has articles that interest you, that it reports the news that you want to know about.

You can do this by writing articles for Abasebenzi yourself. It is not necessary to be a well educated person, not is it necessary to write in English - your own language, whether Xhosa or Sotho, is the best.

Every factory must appoint one worker to write articles for Abasebenzi. His job will be to tell the workers of Cape Town about your problems, your attempts to organize, your successes and your failures. Only in this way can all the workers learn about the problems they face, and how to beat those problems.

Share your experiences and the things you have learned with your brother workers! It is no use being wise if no one can benefit from your wisdom. Write short articles for Abasebenzi - regularly!

Also, if you have a particular problem, write to us and tell us about it. We will do our best to give you the answer - and will put it in Abasebenzi so that other workers can be enlightened too.

Remember - a lamp displays no light when it is hidden under a bucket.

Send your reports to:       The Wages Commission,  
                                  Student Union,  
                                  University of Cape Town  
                                  Rondebosch.

We will not print your name to protect you.

The GENERAL ELECTIONS - what do they hold in store for black workers?

White people vote in the general election on April 24th. They are voting to elect the government that will rule the lives of white people and black people. What can workers expect from this election?

Let us look at who is contesting the election. Firstly, the Nationalist Party ~~is~~ aims to protect the white worker. It has kept most skilled jobs reserved for whites, so that blacks cannot advance. It has kept wages for blacks low - while wages for whites are sky-high. High wages for white workers means a higher cost-of-living for everyone - so black workers are suffering because white workers take such high wages. The Nationalist Party also keeps the contract system - this is to have as few blacks in the cities as are needed for the factories. In other words, a big "store" of black workers has been built up in the "homelands" which is drawn on only when needed by white employers. Because there are so many workers and so few jobs, the employers can keep wages low.

The Nationalist Party is almost certain to win as many if not more seats in Parliament - it already has a majority of 71.

The United Party's policy is similar to the Nationalists. There will be relaxations on job reservations, but not on the pass laws or influx control. It is actually very hard to say exactly what the United Party would do for ~~black~~ black workers, but the main leaders and supporters of the United Party are wealthy businessmen or landowners. The leader, Sir de Villiers Graaf, himself, is a big farmer near Cape Town.

The Progressive Party would give educated or wealthy blacks the vote, and the right to go to Parliament. It would also cause black wages to go up, it would allow trade unions for blacks, it would do away with job reservation, and in time would abolish influx control and pass laws.

It is an enlightened party, but it would make no changes in how the wealth of South Africa is distributed. Its main supporters are often rich businessmen, like Mr. Harry Oppenheimer, who owns many of the mines. It offers some black people a share in the government, but it does not offer black workers a share in the wealth that those workers produce.

Written by G. Young, SRC, UCT

#### AFRICAN WORKERS TAKE HOLD IN NATAL

Following the concerted efforts of workers in Durban and Pietermaritzburg the African trade unions which were started there last year are continuing to expand and become firmly established. Three unions are now operating in Durban - in the Textile, Clothing and Metal and Allied industries. Meanwhile, membership of the General Factory Workers' Benefit Fund (which offers death benefits to its members) has reached 15,000. The Benefit Fund and the three unions also have branches in Pietermaritzburg.

In the short time in which these unions have been operating in Natal, their membership has increased dramatically. The membership of the Metal and Allied Union stands at over 3000, that of the Textile Workers Union at 2000 and that of the Clothing Workers Union at 1000. The unions are at present embarking on extensive training programmes to train workers in union organisation at a factory level.

This progress has been made in spite of attempts by Government and employers to halt the expansion of these unions. Employers have in many cases refused to negotiate with the unions - but as the power of the unions has increased, so more employers have been forced to recognise that their workers want to be represented by a union. At the recent strikes in the textile industry in Durban, for example, the management for the first time negotiated with union officials.

The Government has also attempted to halt the expansion of unions amongst Black workers by banning four of the white trade union organisers who had been active in establishing these unions. Following the bannings, however, hundreds of workers streamed to the trade union offices in Durban to offer their assistance and it is clear that the unions are not going to be defeated by arbitrary Government action of this sort.

#### ADVICE BUREAU TO OFFER BENEFITS TO MEMBERS

In an important move which will benefit thousands of workers in the Western Cape, the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau has proposed offering death and retirement benefits to all its members. This is to form the subject of a special general meeting of members of the Bureau.

The Executive Committee of the Bureau has proposed that for a subscription of 20c/week, all its members be offered death benefits which cover the member's entire family, and retirement benefits which are paid to the member when he retires or leaves the Bureau. Under the proposed scheme, the following death benefits are offered:

On death of a member	R100
On death of his wife/her husband	R100
On death of child between 14 and 21 years old	R100
On death of child between 10 and 14 years old	R 60
On death of child between 6 and 10 years old	R 40
On death of child between 3 and 6 years old	R 30
On death of child under 3 years old	R 20
On death of parent over 65 years old	R 20