

THE WORKERS' NEWSPAPER

1. PRICE OF BREAD GOES UP TO 13C

Every family will have to find 2c extra for each loaf of bread they buy. This is a big blow to people in the townships, where bread is the staple diet.

Some supermarkets have said they will not charge this new price, but will charge the old price of 11c per loaf. But they will not be able to keep this up for long. Soon all shops will charge 13c.

The boss of one big supermarket, Pick 'n Pay, said he was against the rise in the price of bread. He said that the gold mines were now getting huge profits from their gold and that this money should be used to keep the price of bread down.

Workers' families eat 14 loaves of bread each week - this new increase means they will have to fork out an extra 28c each week for bread. Or they will be forced to eat less. It is well-known that bread is essential for a healthy body, so this price increase may bring on more disease.

Meanwhile, the price of butter and cheese will go up today as well. Cheese prices go up by 10c per kilogram. This is just a further blow. Cheese is also very necessary for a healthy family. Recently, too, the price of milk was put up by 1½c or 2c per litre. Workers are being left behind by the cost of living and each price increase is another blow. First milk, then cheese, now bread. Where will it end? Do workers deserve these blows?

2. ADVICE BUREAU STARTED TO HELP WORKERS WITH THEIR PROBLEMS.

A group of workers have formed an advice bureau in Cape Town. It is called the WESTERN PROVINCE WORKERS' ADVICE BUREAU. All problems about your job, your pay, your working conditions and such things as Workmen's Compensation and Unemployment Insurance can be brought to this office and the full-time secretary and helpers will do their best to solve them for you. If they cannot help you, they will send someone who can.

The address of the Workers' Advice Bureau is:

Room No.9.  
1st Floor,  
Benbow Building,  
Beverley Street,  
ATHLONE.

The office will be open regularly from the 5th March onwards. Here are the office hours:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday - 8.30 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.  
Saturday - 9.00 a.m. - 2.00 p.m.

Remember, the Workers' Advice Bureau is there to help you with your problems as a worker. It cannot help you with other things. It will investigate your grievances, it will ask trade unions to fight your case for you, it will ask the Inspector of Labour to take action, or it will approach your boss direct. It is there to help you, but it cannot help you unless you go to the office and tell them your grievances.

There are many expenses in running an office and keeping a secretary, so workers will be asked to join the Workers' Advice Bureau as members by paying 30c joining fee and 15c per month subscription. They will then get a membership card and will be entitled to all the benefits.

The Workers' Advice Bureau will also give workers advice and help when they want to form workers' committees or trade unions.

3. Abasebenzi workers' newspaper needs typists. It is a lot of work typing these pages. If anyone can help, please come to the Advice Bureau - 9, Benbow Buildings,  
Beverley Street,  
Athlone.

4. R30. A WEEK - THE EFFECTIVE MINIMUM LEVEL.

The wages of African workers have been in the news a lot lately - and everyone is talking of the "Poverty Datum Line" (PDL) and the "Effective Minimum Level" (EML).

What are these?

No - one needs to tell workers that they don't get enough money to live on - they know this better than anyone else! But the bosses won't listen when you just tell them - "I'm hungry - I don't get enough money". The bosses need to be told with hard facts how much you need to live on.

He must be told how much you and your family need for transport, for rent, for food, for clothes, for education, for savings etc; and he must be shown that the wage he pays you is not enough to buy all these things which are necessary.

This is why people have calculated how much the average Black family of six people needs to buy all these essential things. They found out that the family needs R20 a week to live on. This is the "Poverty Datum Line" - it only allows for things which are absolutely necessary to live on.

But everyone knows that you must have money for other things too - things like furniture, household goods, entertainment, doctors bills, savings and insurance. So people have calculated that for these things as well. The average African family needs at least R30 a week - this is the "Effective Minimum Level".

When negotiating with your bosses for a higher wage, don't tell him that you don't get enough money and want a rise. Tell him that you need a wage above the "Effective Minimum Level", (R30 a week) and tell him why you need this money. Tell him how much you need for food, for housing and for all the other things that you must spend your money on. If you tell him all these things, he will find it very difficult to justify the low wages he is paying you.

## 5. THE STRIKE IN DURBAN

In January and February, over 50,000 Natal workers went on strike. Industry was paralysed for two weeks, police had to be flown in from Pretoria, and Parliament debated the issue. Why did this strike happen?

The best way we can find a reason for the strikes is to look at the wages that were being paid before the strike. The Frame group of companies provides a good example. At Consolidated Woolwashings, some workers were getting as little as R7.25 per week. Who can support a family on that little, but the bosses of the firm made profits of R2.5 million which is 70% more than the year before. So it is clear who is suffering so that the bosses can make more profits.

There were many other examples of low wages. The Wage Board laid down a wage for the brick making industry of R9.20. But workers at the Coronation Brick Company refused to work for this amount, so they went on strike. The Coronation Brick Company had to raise their wages to R11.04 and the workers are now back at work. It was this strike that started off the whole crisis.

Once the strike spread, some firms reacted by immediately raising wages. The Pietermaritzburg City Council brought wages up from R9 to R12, and the Durban City Council raised wages by R2 per week after 3,000 essential workers had gone on strike. White volunteers had to come in and help with things such as rubbish removal because of the strike. Some firms raised their wages without any strikes occurring. One such was Unilever, which raised wages to R8.50 per week.

Other firms were not so sympathetic. National Containers sacked over 300 workers. Motorvia paid off 200 drivers who wanted R40 per week. Many firms sacked small numbers of workers whom they called "agitators".

The main firms hit were in the Frame Group. Trade unionists accused Mr. Frame of building his empire "on the backs of cheap labour". One of his workers was paid less than R27 per month! Mr. Frame is one of the wealthiest businessmen in the country. But most of his workers earn less than R10.50, so that they don't even get Unemployment Insurance.





