

The truth is that the government forces us to live many miles from our places of work.

We are forced to spend long hours travelling to and from work so that we spend little time with our families.

The bosses pay us too little to meet the cost.

Our struggle against the bus owners is therefore only part of our overall struggle for the rights of workers.

Problems with the buses will only stop when we have achieved this victory.

THE STRUGGLE ON THE MINES

The wealth of S.A. depends on gold mining. The Black South African mineworker, the man who produces the gold, works deep underground, far from his family, and far from other workers. His wage is very low, and every year many hundreds of miners die in accidents.

During last year and in January 1975 the mineworkers have renewed their struggle for better wages and better conditions. Why should other workers take notice of this?

Victories for the mineworkers are victories for all workers, because it is known that when wages go up on the mines, they go up in other industries as well.

Also the mineworkers' struggle is of special interest to all workers who are forced to leave their homes and live in compounds, hostels and such places.

SOLIDARITY WITH THE MINeworkERS is the call the Abasebenzi makes to Black workers in all industries.

THE STRUGGLE ON THE MINES

We took this photograph of a man caught in two minds outside a recruiting office of the gold mines in Harding.

The mines are now offering a starting wage of about R40 a month. Before the miners became militant it was about R13 a month, two or three years ago.

Why are the mineowners trying to get more men?

THE SHORTAGE OF MINeworkERS

The Malawians are not coming anymore. And nobody knows if the miners from Mocambique will still come now that Mocambique is free. The old labour agreement between the governments of S.A. and Mocambique said that the miners could not have a union. Now Frelimo may say: "Our men will come only if they can have a union and the same working conditions that miners have in other countries."

We see that changes taking place around us in Africa can help to change the situation of workers in South Africa.

WILL THEY FIND MORE MINERS IN SOUTH AFRICA?

The men from Malawi and Mocambique used to make up half the work-force on the mines. So now the mineowners are looking elsewhere.

As our photograph shows, the mineowners are now trying to find more miners in S.A., especially in the Transkei. To do this they have now been forced to offer more money. They say that now they will offer money that is nearly the same as a man can earn in industry. To reach this level, they say they will raise wages again during the year.

The miners are forcing the mineowners to pay better wages, though these wages are still low. The miners know that a better wage is not the only thing they have to fight for. The hardships of the compound system, job reservation, and the denial of trade union rights are other obstacles which they face in their struggle. The conflict on the mines in January showed that the mineworkers' struggle goes on.

WHAT HAPPENED THIS TIME

This time the Lesotho workers were dissatisfied. The Lesotho government had made new contracts which said that they would keep 60% of the workers' pay for them in the Lesotho Bank till they came home.

The Lesotho mineworkers, many of whom support the Congress party which Jonathan has banned because it beat him in the election, did not want to leave this money in the Lesotho Bank where it could be used by men they do not support. Also, they did not know if they would get interest on their money.

A deputation of mineworkers from the Western Deep Levels Mine went to Lesotho and put their case very firmly. They said they were working men who earned their own money and should be left to manage it for themselves.

By this time there had been strikes and fighting on several mines, especially Vaal Reefs and President Brand. Jonathan's government gave in to the workers' demands and changed these new contracts which the workers had rejected.

PROGRESS IN THE STRUGGLE

Some things which show that the mineworkers are making progress in their struggle are :

- * The Lesotho workers tried to get workers from other countries and the Transkei to join them in their stand.
- * Leaders, men who can speak and organize, are coming forward. Some of them have been arrested. but because the mineowners are worried about their labour shortage, they want to talk to the miners. Some mineowners have already said that they would recognize a Black Mineworkers' Union.
- * Last year the mineworkers, especially the Malawians, opposed the mineowners by going back to their own countries and getting their governments to support their action. In January the Lesotho miners showed that when a government is unsatisfactory workers can force it to change by taking action on the mines. The weapon of the miners is their labour power. They have shown that they can use it in more ways than one.

HOW SUGAR WORKERS WERE HELPED BY THE MINERS' STRUGGLE

Changes on the gold mines bring changes in other industries. In Natal we have just seen that this is true. In February the cane-cutters on Natal sugar farms were given a starting wage which is slightly higher than the starting wage on the mines. The bosses in the sugar industry were afraid that if they did not do this they would lose workers. Most of the cane-

cutters are from the Transkei and many workers there choose between cane-cutting and mining.

THE MAKING OF THE WORKING CLASS

In the last issue we were told of the discovery of diamonds. We saw that all men had the right to dig for diamonds and workers could sell their labour to whom they pleased.

RESTRICTIONS

But these conditions did not last. The High Commissioner, Barkly, passed a Master and Servants' Act which said that only magistrates could give licences to claim land for digging. The act did not say that only white could have licences - it said that only reliable people of good character should be given licences, but it was easy for white racists to make sure that few Blacks could get land.

The Master and Servants' Act also extended the pass system to Kimberley. Employees had to be registered and they were not allowed to leave the town without permission. This was done to prevent workers from leaving their jobs if they were not satisfied. The workers were not allowed to strike, and they were not allowed to leave either.

But mineowners were still not satisfied. They wanted more workers. They could only get them if they could get Black farmers to work as labourers.

What happened next is what happens in every country which changes from a system of making living from the land to a system where men are forced to work in mines and factories for money. The mineowners and the rich farmers combined to force Africans off the land. They both wanted cheap labour. Laws were passed which made it very hard for Africans to survive on the land.

AFRICANS FORCED TO WORK IN THE TOWNS.

Forced Labour : The Squatter Law forced a tax on all African men who did not work for whites. Another tax increased the amount paid by all African men to the government. For most men, the only way they could pay these taxes was to contract themselves to the mines for money.

For the squatters, selling their crops was made even harder when their rents were raised. By this time the government was in possession of most of the land and they refused to release any of it to Black farmers. When railways lines were built, the trains did not go into Black areas. This made transport costs very high for those wanting to sell their crops in the towns.

WORKING CLASS

And so more and more people from all over the country were forced to seek work. They went first to the diamond mines in Kimberley then later to the gold mines of the Transvaal. Towns around the mines grew rapidly. Soon shops and factories were established. Many people who had come to the towns to seek work for money did not return to the impoverished land but made their homes in the towns. In this way the working class was born.