

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKERS' ORGANISATION

It is extremely important for workers to organise themselves to be a powerful force that will fight any injustice that can affect them as workers. In order to understand the importance of this organisation, workers should know that work is what keeps up their livelihood, the bringing up of families, education, eating, rent, furnishes, entertainment, health etc, so have to raise money for all these things. As all these things can be achieved after many years' efforts, it is important that the only way by which they can be achieved i.e. "work" should offer congenial working conditions i.e. happiness in spirit, security etc. In achieving all this, no workers have ever achieved good working conditions by mere washing or selling one another to the bosses. They have achieved sound and rewarding conditions by standing together and fighting together. One could be keen to know what workers should be standing together for, and what they should be fighting for. In order to answer or realize this, it is important for workers to understand that most employers are together as a powerful force that is just aiming at expanding their businesses and getting richer without taking the workers' needs into consideration. Very few employers ever take the abovementioned requirements of the workers into consideration, most are protecting their interests at the expense of the workers. This state of affairs results in making "work" which is what a human being was made for, "hell". It is therefore of paramount importance that organisations like the Western Province Advice Bureau, Trade Unions, Wages Commission, should be there to help workers in their complaints and in getting organised, negotiations, etc, as it is impossible for workers as individuals to get anything right without victimisation. To be relevant to the Western Province workers' situation, there is the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau, an organisation aimed at helping workers with their difficulties. It has so far embarked upon organising the workers to form up Work Committees. This attempt has been fruitful in many factories.

We have the Steeldale workers that came to join the Advice Bureau not knowing a single right that covered them. The Advice Bureau tried to organise all the workers at that big factory and formed up a Works Committee. This was quite a big task as most workers had never before directly negotiated with employers. But because the Advice Bureau assured them of the protection that the new Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act offered them, the workers of Steeldale formed a Works Committee. Before their names had even been registered in Pretoria the employers started giving workers about 2c an hour increase. After the registration of the committee, the workers had a meeting with the management and started demanding their rights the Advice Bureau taught them which were due to them. This had incredible results. Employers admitted not knowing the regulations that covered their own workers and a lot of wrongs were corrected, like work intervals, sick pay, overtime pay. This encouraged the workers to a point the bosses could not stick and they tried to introduce a Liaison Committee. The workers refused this because they knew it was a means to divide them.

WRITTEN BY AN ORGANISER.