

MAY 2nd Issue

WORKERS AT WAGE BOARD

On Friday morning 3rd May, the government-appointed Wage Board met to hear evidence relating to wages of workers in the Fish Processing Industry. Many workers responded to pamphlets advertising the meeting, 30 workers in all. They came from all over the Western Cape, from Port Nolloth in the North, Lambert's Bay and Saldanha Bay in the South, as well as Cape Town.

The parties who had submitted evidence on behalf of the workers were called on to give their evidence first. After that, the employers put their case forward. Only two workers spoke to the Wage Board. This was unfortunate but understandable since the Chairman of the Wage Board was very strict in limiting the arguments very narrowly.

Many workers wanted to complain about their conditions as well as about wages, but in all cases the Chairman refused to discuss this.

The two workers who spoke made a good impression. The Chairman also cut the meeting short because he had to catch an airplane. Workers did indicate that they would have spoken if they had been given the chance.

It remains to be seen how much notice the Wage Board took of the workers and their representatives. All these people called for R35.00 per week as the basis for a living wage.

The employers offered less than half that per week. They said they could not afford to give more, but did not give any proof that this was the case.

Within the next few months, the Minister of Labour will decide the new minimum wages. Then workers will be able to see how loudly their voice rings under the present unorganized conditions.

-----

CORRECTION

In our September 1973 issue of Abasebenzi, an article entitled "Clements Kadalie and the I.C.U." stated that Kadalie had made an application for ICU membership for the white Trade Union Council, SATUC, in 1928, and that the membership of the ICU at the time was 500,000 members. In the article a comparison was drawn between SATUC and the present TUCSA. This comparison was made to indicate the similarity in function between the two bodies - i.e. co-ordinating bodies of trade unions. We wish to emphasise, however, that the present TUCSA was not the body to which Kadalie made his application for membership. We also wish to correct a misinterpretation concerning the membership of the ICU at the time of Kadalie's application. While Kadalie claimed that the ICU had a membership of 500,000, this figure was exaggerated and the true figure was more like 50,000. Kadalie in fact applied for membership of SATUC in 1928 on the basis of 100,000 members.