

Nightwatchmen - Employers offer R17.00 a week.

At the Wage Board sitting investigating wages paid to nightwatchmen in the Cape which was held on 12th July, the largest employer of nightwatchmen - Cape Night Watch Services - offered to increase wages to R17.00 a week.

This is a very large increase over the R9.60 per week which at present is the minimum wage in the industry. A survey conducted by the Wages Commission showed that the average wage of nightwatchmen was approximately R12/week. The proposals put forward at the Wage Board would therefore mean a minimum increase of 40% for watchmen in the Cape.

The Wage Board sitting was attended by employers the Bantu Labour Officer, TUSCA the Wages Commission, the Labour Party, the Western Province Workers Advice Bureau and about half a dozen workers. The workers' representatives urged the Wage Board not to gazette a wage less than R16.70 / week (the wage laid down for watchmen in the new Unskilled Wage Determination). The Wages Commission and TUSCA asked for a minimum wage of R20/week. None of the workers made representations to the Board - this was later found to be due to language difficulties.

The employer representing Cape Night Watch Services then offered to raise wages to R17.00 a week. This was supported by other employers except for one who claimed that the workers would only spend their extra money on drink !

The Wage Board is now considering the proposals made to it and the new wages should be announced within the next few weeks. The Wage Board did, however, say that that these wages would not be less than R16.70 a week.

Comment on the Wage Board sitting.

The Wage Board sittings are the only method of industrial negotiation offered to African workers. While this is unsatisfactory, it is, nevertheless, an avenue which workers should use to make their voice heard - particularly since it is illegal for employers to victimise their employees for giving evidence to the Board.

Only six watchmen attended the last Wage Board sitting and none of them made representations. If workers cannot follow the proceedings of the Board due to language difficulties, they should ask for interpreters - and the Wage Board should provide them. It is unnecessary that language problems should prevent workers from taking part in negotiations which affect them.

The Wage Board sittings also emphasise the need for worker organisation so that powerful representations may be made by a strong united force of workers. The watchmen have realised this and are now organising themselves into works committees.

SUCCESSFUL WORKERS' SEMINAR HELD.

The Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau held a seminar over the weekend of July 20th - 22nd at the Christian Institute. The Seminar was conducted by Mr Eri Tyacke of the Urban Training Project, Johannesburg. Eighteen workers representing ten different works committees in Cape Town attended.