

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.

The Seminar dealt with the new "Bantu Labour Relations Regulations Act" and its provisions for works committees, liaison committees, section committees and co-ordinating committees, as well as the provisions for striking in certain circumstances. (The Act is dealt with in a separate article in this issue). The differences between the different committees were explained and discussed and workers emphasised that liaison committees over which employers had control were to be avoided.

Other industrial legislation such as the Unemployment Insurance Fund and Workmen's Compensation Act was also discussed. Workers presented problems which they were encountering with their works committees and attempts were made to propose possible solutions.

The workers felt that more seminars and lectures should be organised in order to promote organisation and knowledge of industrial procedures. This suggestion has been followed up and a series of lectures to workers is being organised over the next month. All workers are welcome to attend.

WORKER LECTURE SERIES.

Following the increasing demand by workers for some form of industrial education, a series of lectures by trade unionists and lecturers from the university is to be organised shortly. These lectures will be held weekly, every Saturday afternoon and it is hoped that they will also serve as a meeting place for workers where they can discuss their common problems and ideas.

Work has started on organising the series and the course should begin in September - the dates and venue will be publicised. All workers are welcome to attend. The course will be free.

It is proposed that the course will cover the following topics:- Industrial legislation and the laws governing workers rights and benefits; practical organisation of workers; how a factory operates; background to trade unionism in South Africa; methods of negotiating and bargaining. The lectures will be particularly directed towards the practical situations in which workers operate and will be of benefit to all workers in all the different industries.

DISMISSED WORKERS RE-INSTATED.

A recent case in Johannesburg where 6 workers were dismissed by Raleigh Cycles and have now been re-instated, illustrates the value of the "Prevention of Victimisation" clause in the new Bantu Labour Relations Regulations Act.

In July, the 6 workers were handing out calendars to their fellow workers. These calendars are produced by the Urban Training project and explain, by means of pictures and captions why workers need a works committee and how this must be formed. The workers were campaigning for a works committee at Raleigh Cycles as they had a number of grievances which the indunas refused to take to the management.

The workers were summarily dismissed by the management of the firm. The Urban Training Project decided to help them with legal assistance. The lawyers wrote a letter to the firm demanding reinstatement of the 6 workers. The firm was also asked to give a guarantee that no further dismissals or victimisation would take place, and that a works committee would be established. The firm denied the allegations and it was decided to take the case to the Supreme Court.