

exceed R100 for providing an extra room, and R40 for changing doors inside and outside the house. What the Africans object to is that the municipal authorities have built the houses so that they *all* look exactly alike, as if *all* Africans were exactly the same and had the same tastes.

It is not only in the locations that the effects of this "revolution" can be seen but also in some of the rural outskirts of Pretoria. With the mass forced exodus of Africans from the freehold "black spots", many Africans are building their own houses in places like Winterveldt, Walmansdal and Hebron. These people are not satisfied with the red-brick houses, and those who were forced to move from the "black spots" preferred to build better homes in the new areas. In Walmansdal, for instance, I have seen several such houses although there are still a good number of mud and corrugated iron houses occupied by poorer Africans. Even the latter would very much like to have better homes if they could. But most of the people who have enough money to build in these out-of-town areas are teachers, and traders. Some of these homes are very comfortable. But I have never yet seen an African home with a swimming pool!

Why do Africans build these new homes? I think the main reason is that they feel that there is no privacy whatsoever in the small "match-boxes" that most people are given. If a visitor comes into the house to talk, they must send their children out to play in the street. And if students in the family want to work at night, they cannot concentrate on their studies if other people are talking in one of the rooms in the house. If relatives come to stay, the younger children must be sent out to live in neighbours' houses in order to make room.

Another motive for all this building is this: Many people feel that if they have their own homes, they are secure from permit raids and rent prosecutions.

IN CONCLUSION, I believe that the examples I have discussed demonstrate that African ambitions in all economic fields are strong and steadily growing. I believe that the present coffee-cart owners who block traffic in the Johannesburg streets don't want to remain like that forever. They see themselves as future executives, hotel managers, and store-owners.

Likewise for the Africans who now live in the humiliating "match-boxes". They look forward to a day when they can live in homes that anyone would be proud to own. They believe that the opportunity to have a fine, comfortable home brings with it an increased self-respect and human dignity.

What about the effects on Africans, are they "not ready for rapid economic advancement", as the government would have us believe? A thousand times no. Take the matter of housing: In the dull endless rows of "match-boxes" people do not feel any pride or sense of security. They are careless with their houses because they do not regard them as truly theirs, since they live under constant fear of ejection. But, give a man a house that is truly worthy of being lived in, and look at the difference! No person can be expected to put any time or care into improving his lot if he lives in constant fear of being removed from his home because of the whim of some government official erasing a "black spot" from a map. ●

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## Earnings

*The state must intervene*

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S. N. NDLUMBINI

I DO NOT PROPOSE TO PRESENT the South African Income Distribution in a tabular form, which is rather complex due to racial variations. I wish to enquire into the thorny problem of African wage increases which happens to be a current topic.

Like other countries the South African labour force is divided into three categories, namely skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour. In such a case there is bound to be a wage differentiation, but in South Africa unlike other countries there is in existence another differentiation, based purely on colour. Taking the two extremes, the Africans comprise a majority in the unskilled group and the whites in the skilled group. The gap between these two groups tends to be artificially wide, based as it is on both economic and non-economic factors. The average monthly wage for Africans is roughly R30 and that of the Whites R120. It is a wide gap indeed, and its tendency has been towards widening rather than narrowing.

The State and the businessmen have expressed their recognition of the inadequacy of the African wage for a reasonable standard of living. The sociologists give R50 per month as a minimum living wage for a family of five, a figure which gives no allowance for anything other than basic essentials of life. When you add things like transport, medical care and some minor recreations you arrive at a figure of R70 per month.

In both the public and private sectors of the economy it is agreed that this wage increase should be gradual and must be accompanied by increased productivity. The noticeable disagreement, however, is on who must play the leading role: the government, through the Wage Board, which normally takes a long time before giving any new revision, or through government directive; or businessmen themselves. The government seems to favour the businessmen's initiative, but the businessmen favour government operation through the Wage Board.

Between these two sectors there is an underlying fear that an immediate radical African wage increase, which is a human necessity, to the reasonable figure of R70 per month would disrupt the whole economy. It is true such a wage increase would mean additional costs and might lead to prices rising. This would, of course, mean that real wages would remain constant and therefore wage earners would be no better off than before. It is consequently suggested that this could be avoided by a simultaneous increase in productivity. The interesting

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fact, though, is that labour productivity presupposes perfect competition in the labour market, which in the present South African set-up is non-existent.

As long as the government fails to stipulate and enforce this required minimum wage, no individual firm will take the lead. This to some extent is due to the profit motive, for firm A will fear to increase its wage bill because firm B may not increase its wage and therefore firm B would be at an advantage. In such a confused situation it seems more appropriate for the State both to intervene and lay down the required minimum wage, and also to seek to prevent prices from rising. In point of fact, the increase in costs will be negligible and at the same time purchasing power will be expanded and will offset these costs. It is argued that the essential factor for a steady growth is to expand regional markets rather than domestic ones. But those prospective markets cannot be fully satisfied if the domestic market is marked by high inactivity and sluggishness. Both are requirements for a healthy economic growth.

It follows then that money-wage increase, apart from the effective demand it will create, will have a psychological effect on the workers which will induce them to be more productive. This wage increase and price stability will create a favourable climate for investment. Although there might be a small drop in domestic savings, for a short period, large amounts of foreign capital would be attracted to relieve and supplement our strained savings. The economic growth would be so dynamic that the problem would be how to utilise this invading capital rather than how to prevent capital flight. The country's foreign exchange reserves would not be increased by means of import control measures but by the expansion of external trading. The expenditure on combating tuberculosis would be greatly reduced and the newly established anti-malnutrition groups would disappear.

An accompanying, and equally essential improvement would be the acceptance and treatment of Africans by individual firms as humans rather than as ordinary insensate tools. This indeed is one of the major weaknesses of the South African businessmen. A feeling of belonging, in a reasonable manner, does create healthy relationships in a firm and as such improves productivity.

In the process there arises the question of declining industries and the displacement of the labour force. In any event there would be a shift of resources from the declining industries to the growing industries. The prevailing favourable business climate would present the growing industries with the opportunity to absorb the released labour. Therefore there need be no unemployment as such, except probably structural unemployment. The emphasis should be on full utilisation of all available resources. When you examine statistics for unemployment you find an unrealistic picture, since there is no provision for those Africans who, because of influx control, have no employment.

Then by way of considering labour immobility, job reservation you arrive at a figure of disguised unemployment. This is very wasteful indeed for a large amount of non-white labour is canalised to a specific type of work not because of either efficiency or inefficiency, but

because of colour. Talent that could be unearthed is, through legislation and prejudice, forced to decay unseen. Amongst those protected there is an abundant amount of inefficiency and the lack of a driving force to improve productivity because of the limited scope of competition. It follows therefore that these artificial barriers, by and large have contributed to the sluggishness of the economy and to the great resentment of the non-white workers. African trade unions are not recognised. If they were recognised they would have contributed much in bringing the economy to a more realistic structure. Through their 'shock effect' they would provide impetus to the employers to revise their organisational and managerial methods to the advantage of the whole economy.

In some quarters one hears the fallacy that African wage increase would be wasteful because Africans have limited wants. Considering first what may be called inborn wants like food, health, clothing and shelter, there is no serious thinking person who could reasonably declare that a particular group of people (of whatever colour) does not possess these wants. Secondly, there are wants which may be called creative wants. These are wants which are created through the passage of time, for example, through the availability of things which were not there before. The satisfaction of all these wants is to a large extent limited by income distribution. It follows therefore that income distribution has a limiting effect on one's satisfaction even to the extent of causing starvation among Africans. To say that an African, because of the income group he happens to be enforced to belong to, has less wants than a white man is an illusion. It would be equally an illusion to assert that a businessman who has been making, say, R100,000 net profit per year does not wish to double that figure. It goes without saying that if the majority of people in a society is not reasonably satisfied there can be no peace and as such no climate for a dynamic and advancing economy.

It is my conviction that there can be no realistic achievement until the whole problem is approached in a progressive manner based on non-racialism. The problem therefore involves the acceptance of non-racialism by the society as a whole, the state and the individual businessman; and then the adoption of an intensive and extensive training of all available human resources accompanied by the creation of equal opportunities for all. ●

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Peter Clarke

ELEVEN O'CLOCK: THE  
WAGONS, THE SHORE

Mr. Clarke's story won a prize in a short story competition run by *Encounter*, London, in 1958, was read on the BBC Third Programme, and will appear in print for the first time, in *The New African*, October 1962.