

required. In order to preserve the freedom of action of the Governing Body, the personnel of the National Vocational Office should not be civil servants nor have their privileges.

The Report finally recommends that a *Provisional Vocational Assembly* be established and entrusted with the task of preparing the legislative and administrative measures that would be required to set up the National Councils, Conferences, Commissions, and Assembly referred to in the Report.

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As the Chairman of the Commission points out in a foreword, the Report, while explicitly recognising that several forms of organisation are possible, "endeavours to outline a scheme that will be just, efficient, and adapted to the conditions of the country". He also emphasises that not all its recommendations are capable of being carried into effect at once.

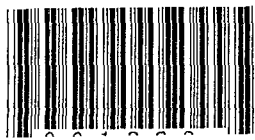
The Report, he says, is a serious effort to show how abstract principles can be applied to the concrete realities of our complex social and economic life. But it does not pretend to provide detailed drawings or blueprints for the erection and interior decoration of an elaborate structure conceived after the manner of a material building which is to be occupied at once. It has in more than one place made it clear that vocational organisations should develop from existing institutions and follow the laws of organic, vital growth, without violent breach of continuity. Not all the plans and suggestions in the Report are put forward as immediately operable: some must await the development of others as their firm foundation. Many details and proposals have been left to the discretion of some administrative or vocational body in order to secure that growth be guided by increasing experience.

Conditions of African Employment on the Rand Gold Mines

As previously recorded in these pages, increases in the wages of South African Natives employed by the Witwatersrand gold mining industry came into effect on 1 April 1944.¹ These increases were decided by the Government of the Union of South Africa after consideration of the report of a committee which was appointed in February and concluded its work in December 1943.² Since the report, now published, in addition to examining questions of Rand wages, submitted considerations on the general structure of employment that may be of

¹ *International Labour Review*, Vol. L, No. 4, Oct. 1944, p. 522.

² Union of South Africa: *Report of the Witwatersrand Mine Natives' Wages Commission on the Remuneration and Conditions of Employment of Natives on Witwatersrand Gold Mines*, 1943. U.G. No. 21—1944 (Pretoria, Government Printer, 1944). iii+62 pp.



*importance to other mining centres in Africa, a brief analysis is given below.*¹

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INDUSTRY

The importance of the Witwatersrand gold mining industry to the Union of South Africa is shown by the following table of the payments made by the mines for 1942:

	£,000's
European salaries and wages.....	20,400
Non-European wages.....	12,700
Stores and equipment.....	30,200
Other expenditure.....	7,500
Total working costs.....	70,800
Taxation.....	22,200
Government share from Lease Mines.....	2,800
Various licences and fees.....	500
Gold realisation charges.....	2,200
Total Government share.....	27,700
Dividends.....	16,900
Total payments.....	115,400

Of the sum expended for stores and equipment, 80 per cent. was for articles of South African origin or manufacture. Not more than 50 per cent. of the dividends went outside the Union. The other payments were distributed entirely in South Africa.

The gold of the Witwatersrand is, however, a waning asset. The latest estimates indicate that there will be a very marked decline from 1950, involving at the present price-cost relationship and the present ratio of European to Native labour a decline in employment capacity from 38,000 Europeans and 335,000 Natives in 1945 to 6,000 Europeans and 48,000 Natives in 1965. Developments outside the Witwatersrand area may partly compensate for this decline, but the general prospect in gold mining in the Union is of a decreasing demand for labour.

NATIVE LABOUR IN GOLD MINING

The Report states that to a very large extent the gold mining industry is dependent upon unskilled Native labour, and that it is of the greatest importance to the industry that the supply of such labour should be adequate to keep its reduction plants running

¹ For a general impression of the conditions of Native labour in South Africa, see *International Labour Review*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 6, June 1939, pp. 773-803: "Visit of the Governing Body delegation to the Union of South Africa", which describes the visit that a delegation of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office made in December 1938 to January 1939, on the invitation and as the guests of the South African Government, in order to provide the members of the Governing Body with first-hand information on Native labour conditions in South Africa.

at full capacity. When milling capacities range between 55,000 and 93,000 tons per month, decreases in the rate of milling amounting to 10, 20, 30, and 40 per cent. would result from decreases in the Native labour force of 9, 16, 22½, and 28 per cent. respectively. This decreased milling would entail increased costs per ton milled of 4½, 9½, 15, and 22½ per cent. Much attention, therefore, has been paid by the Chamber of Mines to the recruiting of Natives with a view to supplying each mine with its full complement of labour.

The methods followed by the Chamber of Mines to obtain labour through its subsidiaries, the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association and the Native Recruiting Corporation, were described in the *Review* in 1930.¹ The picture drawn in the present Report shows no fundamental change. The Report dismisses as groundless the allegations that in many cases the recruit is unaware of the terms of the contract to which he affixes his mark. It also records that in general no duress is practised upon the Natives by trader-recruiters.

The number of Native labourers employed on the gold mines of the Witwatersrand in normal circumstances is about 366,000, including some 6,000 employed on non-Chamber mines. The following statement represents a territorial analysis of the Chamber Native labour force, which may be regarded as typical:

Union:		
Cape Province.....	125,000	
Natal and Zululand.....	20,000	
Orange Free State.....	5,000	
Transvaal.....	30,000	
		180,000
High Commission Territories:		
Basutoland.....	45,000	
Bechuanaland.....	10,000	
Swaziland.....	8,000	
		63,000
East Coast:		
Mozambique (south of latitude 22°S.).....	87,000	
Nyasaland and Northern and Southern Rhodesia.....	30,000	
		360,000

Ninety-nine per cent. of the Native workers upon the Witwatersrand gold mines are tribal Natives who, for the most part, leave their lands and stock in charge of their families while they are away at work on the mines. The average period of a labourer at work is at present 14 months and he then returns to his home for a stay which may extend to 12 months, thereafter returning to the mines for another period of labour. Something less than 1 per cent. of the total Native labour force consists of detribalised Natives, but these mostly are men of some education who are employed not as intermittent workers but as clerks and the like on a more or less permanent basis.

¹ *International Labour Review*, Vol. XXII, No. 3, Sept. 1930, pp. 363-367: "Native Labour on the Witwatersrand".

NATIVE WAGES

In the early days of gold mining the average monthly wage of Natives was as high as 63s., exclusive of keep. From 1893, however, the Chamber of Mines pursued a policy designed to assure an adequate and regular supply of labour at what is regarded by the industry as a reasonable wage. In particular, a system known as "the maximum average" is in operation, fixing an average daily wage for all labourers on all Chamber mines, and providing penalties for any mine which exceeds the average save for good cause shown.

In February 1943 the distribution of wage rates for Natives was as follows:

Earnings per shift	Number of employees		
	Surface	Underground	Total
Less than 1s. 9d.....	4,658	—	4,658
1s. 9d. to 1s. 11d.....	30,360	—	30,360
2s. 0d.....	17,488	107,690	125,178
2s. 1d. to 2s. 3d.....	7,993	61,648	69,641
2s. 4d. to 2s. 6d.....	5,742	26,427	32,169
2s. 7d. to 2s. 9d.....	1,922	12,026	13,948
2s. 10d. to 3s. 0d.....	1,562	5,741	7,303
3s. 1d. to 4s. 0d.....	2,003	6,541	8,544
4s. 1d. to 6s. 0d.....	1,402	5,258	6,660
6s. 0d. and over.....	135	1,181	1,316
Total.....	73,265	226,512	299,777

To the above cash wage must be added the cost of maintenance of the labourers, involving, as estimated by the Chamber, a total cost to the employer of 13.4d. per shift per man.

The Report states that, in spite of the contrary views expressed by certain witnesses, the Commission was satisfied that the Chamber's policy of fostering a cheap Native labour supply was sound and in general accordance with the Native policy of the country. The Report adds, however, that conditions have changed materially since the early days of the industry. The Native labour force, which averaged 68,000 in 1898, reached a peak figure of over 370,000 in 1942. "Whereas formerly the Native in the Reserves, either on account of higher productivity of his lands or because of his simpler tastes, was reluctant to leave his home, today he is forced by economic pressure to seek employment which will enable him to support his wife and family, and this pressure is so great that the gold mining industry is able, in spite of the competition due to the increased demands of secondary industries, to recruit Native labour for underground work at a cash wage of 2s. per shift."

The main problem confronting the Commission was therefore to answer the question whether the Chamber of Mines was justified in continuing its wage policy or the Government in acquiescing in it.

The arguments put to the Commission in favour of increased wages may be summarised as follows:

- (a) The absence of any substantial increases of pay from 1914 onwards, notwithstanding the increased prosperity of the industry;
- (b) The lack of provision for automatic increments;
- (c) Deductions from pay;
- (d) The payment of overtime at ordinary instead of increased rates;
- (e) No provision for paid leave of absence;
- (f) The increased cost of living and consequent additional expenditure both by the worker on the Witwatersrand and by him and his family in the Reserve;
- (g) The decreased income from the lands in the Reserves;
- (h) The inadequacy of remuneration of the Native mine labourer as compared with that of the unskilled labourer in other industries on the Witwatersrand; and
- (i) The long hours of work of underground labourers, and the dangerous and arduous nature of their work.

The contentions of the Chamber of Mines fell under the following heads:

- (a) The adequacy of the present cash wage, having regard to the value to the Native of his remuneration in kind—in particular, the feeding, housing, and medical attention provided;
- (b) The dependence of the industry upon the migratory system of labour, and the additional means of subsistence which is afforded the labourer from his occupation in his Reserve;
- (c) The present financial position of the industry and its inability to pass on extra expenditure;
- (d) The effect of additional expenditure upon working costs—in particular, the shortening of the life of the industry and the placing of certain mines beyond the limit of payability; and
- (e) The resulting effect upon secondary industries and upon the general economic situation of the Union.

FAMILY INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Practically 99 per cent. of the Native labour force is drawn from distant rural areas. These workers alternate their periods of mining employment with periods of residence on their own lands, where their families remain while they are absent on the mines. The Commission was therefore led to examine in some detail the economic requirements in Native territories, the family earnings and outgoings from the land, and the contribution to earnings provided by mine wages.

The Chamber of Mines submitted figures which suggested that over a period of 26 months the average married mine worker would spend 14 months in employment and 12 months at home. This calculation of the average period in employment was questioned by the Commission. Following the Chamber's argument, however, the worker's minimum cash earnings for his period of employment would be £35 14s. 0d. if an underground worker, or £31 4s. 9d. if a surface worker, while his cash requirements for himself and his

family over the whole period of 26 months would be £28 on the basis of 1939 costs, less £7 resulting from the sale of surplus produce; and, although present conditions have raised the 1939 sum of £28 to £36, the Native, as a subsistence farmer, has not been materially affected thereby.

The Commission could not, however, accept the Chamber's estimates of costs: it drew up a number of budgets indicating the inability of the Native mine worker to save enough money while working on the mines to provide for the family needs not met by the produce of his land. The following two examples are extracted from the sample budgets, A being a surface worker spending 14 months at the mines and 10 months at home, and B an underground worker who has worked 18 months at the mines and remained 6 months at home:

	A			B		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Income:						
Wages.....	31	4	9	45	18	0
Cash income from home production.....	8	10	0	8	10	0
Own produce consumed by family.....	27	0	4	27	0	4
Total income.....	66	15	1	81	8	4
Expenditure:						
Extra food and clothing for family, taxes, etc..	87	10	0	87	10	0
Miner's ordinary clothing.....	7	18	0	7	18	0
Miner's additional requirements at mines.....	7	14	11	13	8	3
Miner's food while at home.....	8	13	4	5	4	0
Total expenditure.....	111	16	3	114	0	3

In these circumstances, the Report states, the conclusion is unavoidable that the labourer, generally speaking, has had to be satisfied with a scale of living which must be regarded as unsatisfactory, being below the line of ordinary reasonable requirements.

MIGRATORY LABOUR

Considerations such as the above led the Commission to propose increases in wages. These proposals were met in part by the above-mentioned decision of the Government that the wage per shift would be increased by 4d. for surface workers and 5d. for underground workers. Of more general and longer interest are the comments made by the Commission on the Native labour system under which the mines are predominantly manned by workers whose families remain behind in the Reserves.

This migratory labour system is on the whole accepted by the Commission as suitable, having regard to the circumstances of the Witwatersrand gold mining industry. A number of qualifying points, however, are made.

The contention on which the Commission's family budgets were principally based was that, if the migratory labour system is to continue, "then the combined income of those labourers from wages and their Reserve production should provide them and their

families with a proper livelihood, not only for the period during which the man is at work on the mines, but for such period of stay in the Reserve as will enable him to maintain his tribal association, keep in reasonable touch with his family, preserve his health, and retain an adequate control of the interests of his allotment". This principle, it is to be noted, is in complete opposition to any use of the migratory labour system at wage rates sufficient for the remuneration of the worker alone, and is a South African amplification of the principle adopted by the International Labour Conference at Philadelphia that "forms of economic enterprise which require the labour of workers living away from their homes shall take account of the normal family needs of the workers".¹

The Commission did not consider that any deficiency between income and reasonable expenditure could be met by longer employment. As the sample figures given above show, even with an 18 months' absence in two years the deficiency remained substantial. Moreover, the Report notes that:

The fact that the Commission has adopted, for purposes of illustration, the maximum period of work at the mines of eighteen months, and the minimum period of six months' stay in the Reserve, must not be taken as an indication that it in any way considers this arrangement as desirable. It would be difficult to assert what the precise period of stay should be. . . since the matter is often dependent upon individual circumstances, but the Commission offers the opinion that, in general, the period of fourteen months' work at industry and eight months in the Reserve, which is the present average, probably represents a wholesome standard.

While these periods represent an average, a contribution to the average is made by the more well-to-do class of Native who remain at home except when special money needs have to be satisfied. Thus, those workers who have more need of wages tend to spend a longer proportion of their time than the averages indicate. A test check taken in November 1943 showed that of 10,000 Natives engaging for work on the mines, 1,872 had not been previously employed, but that for the 8,128 balance the following had been the period of months spent in the Reserves since the last mining employment:

	Number	Percentage of those previously employed
1 month.	647	7.96
3 months or under.	1679	20.66
6 months or under.	3642	44.82
11 months or under.	5181	63.74
12 months or over.	2947	36.26

Comparable percentages for 1931 suggest that the proportion of Natives making only a short stay at home is increasing. "In the early days", the Report states, "Natives went to the mines to satisfy definite needs which could not be met from their production in the Reserves, and they returned to their homes, as soon as they had earned enough money to satisfy these needs, for a

¹ *Social Policy in Dependent Territories Recommendation, 1944*, Article 35 (3).

period which might extend to one, two or even three years. . . This is, however, no longer the position for many of the Reserve Natives, a considerable percentage of whom have to work for hire almost continuously."

Thus, the Commission, while accepting the system of migratory labour, expected a more marked division between industrial and peasant labour. The Report puts this as follows:

The policy of developing the Reserves is not unlikely to result in the encouragement of a certain proportion of the allotment holders to devote to their agricultural pursuits, if not the whole of their time, then far more of it than is at present given by the peasant who today draws from the mines a part of his means of subsistence. Further, it is clear that in the years to come there will be an ever-increasing body of Natives in or from the Reserves who will be without allotments and who, whether resident in the Reserves or elsewhere, will be dependent entirely upon their earnings by their labour without the subsidiary means available in the case of the bulk of the migrant labourers today. A large number of these men must be absorbed into industries, some of which, it may be hoped, will be within the Reserves supplying needs of their inhabitants, but more of which are likely to be in, or in the neighbourhood of, the great centres outside them. A long-range view of the position indicates that the gold mining industry could not continue indefinitely to claim exemption from participation in this process.

GENERAL CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

A number of questions are examined in the Report as subsidiary to the question of wage rates. These will be mentioned briefly, as similar questions arise in other areas of African mining employment, and as some of these matters will be under international consideration at the next general session of the International Labour Conference.¹

The length of the daily shift on the Rand is 8 hours. Considerable time, however, is sometimes taken in transporting the workers from the shaft head to the working levels and back again. The Report gives an example of a delay of over three hours after the end of a working shift. A system of what has been called "staggering" the shifts has been put into operation on some of the gold mines with a considerable measure of success, and in the opinion of the Commission, the scheme of staggered shifts should receive the study and consideration of mine managements.

The Commission found rations in present circumstances to be adequate and satisfactory, and considered that to grant a request that the Natives should provide their own food would be to their disadvantage.

The compound system is not examined at any length in the Report. The general opinion, however, is expressed that it is impracticable to make any radical alteration in the system, but that there should be constant striving for better conditions.

Representatives of the British administrations in Basutoland,

¹ Cf. International Labour Conference, Twenty-seventh Session, 1945, Questionnaire I: *Minimum Standards of Social Policy in Dependent Territories (Supplementary Provisions)* (Montreal, 1944).

Bechuanaland, and Swaziland suggested to the Commission that some provision should be made for visiting wives. On this proposal the Report comments as follows:

This could never be done unless satisfactory accommodation for the women could be provided upon the mining properties, for even if they could obtain accommodation in a neighbouring urban location, that course would be undesirable. A considerable number of women, mostly Basuto, who have come to the Witwatersrand to be for a time with their husbands working upon the mines, have fallen victims to the temptation of becoming permanent residents in the urban locations and earning money by brewing and selling liquor and other undesirable practices. A few Native witnesses appearing before the Commission favoured a scheme of visiting wives provided they could be accommodated on the mining properties, but in the great majority of cases the opposite view was taken, the men pointing to the undesirability of their women leaving their children and abandoning their home duties, and to the risk of exposing them to the temptations of the Witwatersrand. By the mines the objections to the proposal were based upon the practical difficulty of providing the necessary accommodation, the difficulty of ensuring the return of the women to their homes, and the expenditure which the labourer would have to incur in providing for railway fares.

The Commission is of opinion that the visiting wives scheme is not one which it is practical to adopt and that, if adopted, the results would not be commensurate with the expense and difficulty which would be involved.

The British representatives also suggested the compulsory deferment of a part of wages. This is already provided for in the case of Mozambique, Nyasaland, and Northern Rhodesian workers engaged under special agreement with the respective Governments; and on an average 49 per cent. of Natives from other territories have accepted voluntary deferred pay. The Commission recommended further propaganda in favour of voluntary deferred pay, but felt that "so serious an interference with liberty as compulsory allotment or deferment of pay would entail would hardly be warranted and would be resented by a considerable proportion of the workers".

The case has frequently been put that interest on deferred pay should be paid to the individual worker. The existing system is that a Deferred Pay Interest Board of Control, consisting of three Government nominees and three representatives of the Native Recruiting Corporation, administers the interest earned and makes grants for various welfare purposes. The Commission considered that for the present this system should continue, that the Board's accounts should be laid before the principal Native councils interested, and that efforts should be directed to allocating the funds in such a way as to benefit proportionately the aggregate of men from each particular area.

One other wage question touched on is that of periodicity of payments. Under the present system wages become due after the completion by the worker of a ticket of thirty working shifts, and, owing to the distribution of pay days, he probably does not obtain his wages until the sixth week after the day from which pay commenced. The Commission does not seem to have attached much

weight to complaints on this head and held that the institution of weekly pay would involve a large amount of extra clerical labour. The Report suggests, however, that, if dissatisfaction continues, the matter of decreasing the periods between pay days should be considered in the case of clerks employed by the mines, who are permanent employees and residents, and that, if weekly payments cannot be arranged, payments should be made at the end of each calendar month.

TRADE UNIONISM

The Commission admitted "the desirability of recognising the broad principle of negotiation between employer and employee, and that, where bodies of employees are concerned, the right of collective bargaining with employers and other benefits of trade unionism must not lightly be denied". It also recognised that existing systems for investigating individual complaints is not adapted to the treatment of mass grievances or the expression of the collective views of the workers.

Nevertheless, the Commission held that the bulk of the Native mine workers are not sufficiently advanced to benefit by trade unionism. It made suggestions, however, that means should be provided for workers to bring their general grievances to the notice of the authorities, as by the appointment of special officers and ultimately by the encouragement of councils of mine workers. It also recommended that the existing Native Mine Clerks' Association should be developed on trade union lines, but subject to the conditions that all officers of the Association must be non-European employees of the mines, that there must be regular and proper audits, and that there must not be affiliation with persons or organisations outside the mine services. The Commission also examined the position of the 2,500 Native workers in the employment of the company which supplies most of the mines with electric power. As these workers are held to be of a more constant type and of a higher standard than the mine workers, the Report suggests that trade unionism might, subject to certain conditions, work to the satisfaction of the employer and the advantage of the workers.
