

South African Communist Party Documents. 1918

To the Workers of the Bantu Race

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Editorial Note: During a boycott of concession stores on the Witwatersrand organised by African mineworkers because, in the words of **The International**, 'Prices of commodities have gone up double while the wages of the native labourer remain the same', the International Socialist League circulated a leaflet in Sesuto and Zulu throughout the compounds -the first time a direct approach had been made to the African workers in their own languages.

WORKERS OF THE BANTU RACE! Why do you live in slavery? Why are you not free as other men are free? Why are you kicked and spat upon by your masters? Why must you carry a pass before you can move anywhere? And if you are found without one, why are you thrown into prison? Why do you toil hard for little money? And again thrown into prison if you refuse to work. Why do they herd you like cattle into compounds,

WHY?

Because you are the toilers of the earth. Because the masters want you to labour for their profit. Because they pay the Government and the Police to keep you as slaves to toil For them.

If it were not for the money that they make from your labour, you would not be oppressed.

But mark! You are the mainstay of the country. You do all the work, you are the means of their living.

That is why you are robbed of the fruits of your labour and robbed of your liberty as well.

There is only one way of deliverance for you, Bantu workers. Unite as workers³ unite! Forget the things that divide you. Let there be no longer any talk of Basuto, Zulu, or Shangaan. You are all labourers. Let Labour be your common bond.

Wake up! And open your ears. The sun has arisen, the day is breaking. For a long time you were asleep when the great mill of the rich man was grinding and breaking the sweat from your work for nothing. You are strongly urged to come to the meeting of the workers and fight for your rights. Come and listen to the good news and deliver yourselves from the chains of the Capitalist. Unity is strength. The fight is great against the many pass laws that persecute you, and the low wages and the misery of existence. Workers of all lands unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to win.

<http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sections/sacp/1918/bantu-workers.htm>