

PUBLIC INTEREST IN UNIONS

WHITE UNIONS URGE AFRICAN UNIONS

In a surprising change of attitude, eight of the largest white unions in the country have decided to support unions for Africans.

These unions, which include the white union to which the white workers at Alcan belong, say that they will set up trade unions for Africans.

Isisebenzi interviewed a prominent white trade unionist about this new move:

Isisebenzi: Why have the white unions decided to start African unions? For many years they have opposed African unions?

Trade Unions: I don't think that the white trade unions now support Africans trade unions because they have come to love the black man. They simply want to protect their own interests. They realize that their own jobs are in danger unless Africans have trade unions.

Isisebenzi: What dangers are the white unions scared of?

Trade Unionist: In South Africa there are too many skilled jobs and too few skilled and trained workers to fill them. So whether the whites like it or not Coloureds, Indians and Africans have begun to do these skilled jobs. They even have African shunter on the railways now!

But blacks have always been paid low wages in South Africa. And even though many blacks are now doing skilled jobs their wages are lower than white wages. What the white workers are terrified of is that the bosses will sack them. If the bosses see that blacks can do the job just as well as whites- and at half the wages- then their jobs are no longer secure. That is why they now support African unions and equal pay for equal work.

Isisebenzi: Do you think the white unions have made a good decision?

Trade Unionist: Yes I think that their acceptance of African trade unions will benefit everybody. I realise that they only want to protect their own interests. But if this means that Africans can hope for equal pay for equal work then it is a good thing.

BOSSSES TAKE FRIGHT

The Union notes with appreciation that the Sarmcol bosses have become aware of the growing power of our Union. They are so worried that they started issuing expensively printed notices to all workers.

The workers have a couple of suggestions for the gentleman:

1) Instead of wasting money on pamphlets he uses it for improving wages.

2) Instead of telling us about all the wonderful things works committees bring, let him explain why they cannot bring the only important thing namely: HIGHER WAGES

3) As he seems unable to understand that in the near future he will have to negotiate with the Union and not the works committee, he resign and make way for someone who does.