

FIRE IN THE MINE

From 11th September 1973 where 11 miners were shot dead through salary misunderstanding which emanated in the mines at Western Deep Levels, Carletonville, misunderstandings flared on like a wild fire in the four mines in South Africa.

At first the workers started by fighting amongst themselves, and different associations quarrelled among. At the coal mine at Durnacol, north of Natal, ten of them died during October, 1973. At the Black Rock mine in the district of Kuruman only one person died during January 1974. From the 9th February to the 17th April, 1974, 30 died in these mines.

Through these unrests thousands could not work in the mines and returned to their homes in Lesotho, Transkei and to Matawi. In all these mines the production went down and workers caused a lot of damage, damaging kitchens, dormitories, administration offices lecturer rooms and also telephone exchanges.

DISTURBANCES OF JUNE

From the 28th May to 15th June workers again attacked the authority and the police demanding for better pay from these following mines in the Orange Free State :- Lorraine, Harmony and at Merriespruit. Seven eventually died. The authority were forced to raise the salaries. Mr Honnet (Manager of Harmony) after salaries were raised, said "I cannot do anything else"

The mine authorities were afraid that such unrest may also happen in other mines. Therefore on the 15th June the Chamber of Mines announced that in all gold mines, shift pay will be raised to R1,20 or R31,20 per month, including food and accommodation. On the 19th June even the workers in the coal mines were granted increase in salary to the same amount (R31,20).

BLACK WORKERS IN THE MINES

During the last two years the miners used to receive R13,00 per month. For the last 50 years workers use to receive very little salary. That is because production went up and their salaries did not go up. Between 1919 and 1969 the salaries for whites were doubled compared to the salaries for blacks. One of the reasons for that was the whites have strong unions which speaks for them to the mines authority to better their salaries even to those who came from better paying employment. Rather than that most of the big companies like Anglo American they have the power of buying people at low prices this side and outside South African where there are no objections. Through being afraid of hunger people are forced to go and do dangerous work in the mines and for a meagre salary. Thus most people in South Africa should work in the mines when unrest develops in the mines most of the people strike.

WILL THERE BE A CHANGE

It would seem the wheel turns. The amount of gold in South Africa which was sold to other countries was increased in 1972. That levitates to the mine owners to increase the salaries. But it surprises to see the black workers carrying on

with unsatisfactory salaries instead of workers being satisfied. It caused them to ask for more rights. In June the chamber of Mines was obliged to raise the salaries by ~~R4.80~~ R4.80 per shift - something they said they would never do, now they want to see if workers are satisfied. From the middle of June the peace which was not in the mines, now prevails.

WHY DOES THE FLAME FLARE?

Owners of the mines say they are surprised why workers are not satisfied when they now receive such better salaries? As this one might call "fighting for themselves" what is happening? Do they think their striking a compromise with workers does not go the right way. The mine owners. The mine owners say the workers are not clear about their raised salaries which they are given. One thing which is being thought by managers is that there is a union amongst the workers and they say is an aim for all these unrests.

This news bulletin (Isisebenzi) that these explanations are wise. We agree with Dr van Wyk of the body known as S.A. Institute of Race Relations who said to Natal Mercury of the 12th June. "The unrest in the mines is part of the trouble of unrest which embodies all the workers in the firms in South Africa". Dr van Wyk went on to say it was necessary that the Government should take steps soon which will enable the workers the way they would like to be which satisfies workers in South Africa.

ABOUT THE WHICH TOOK PLACE

Photograph

Strikes carries on. The African workers in the post-office strike it has destroyed telephones and places where cables are laid in town. Here some of the men show salaries they receive outside the depot at old Fort Road in Durban.

After the bulletin Lisisebenzi which has just been published there has been strikes at the following firms Acme Timber Industries; Balatium Linoleum, Reynolds, Escombe Power station as well as at the post office. There must be some thing we learn from the efforts by these workers.

At the same factory 80 Blacks and Indians were paid off after they had asked that their salaries be raised by R3,00. The authority in the firm said they would take on those workers they needed not all workers heard this and all decided not to go to work. At Reynolds the authority of the firm paid off 90 workers who wanted their salaries to be raised as they had been promised by the firm authorities. The authority said they would not take on workers because they had employed 20.

They tried to abolish the unity of workers by deceiving them. At Reynolds 11 workers were standing outside the firm. One of the authority at the firm asked why do they not work because other workers had gone back to work that was not the truth and the workers went back to work. The authority succeeded to destroy the unity of workers.

The first week in May thousand workers of black workers and