

Chapter Fifteen

BLACK WORKERS

Introduction

THIS CHAPTER should have been titled 'Black Workers', to cover the different aspects of Black workers in the economy of the country.

However, for certain reasons pertaining to the conditions and actions of Black workers in 1973, this chapter deals only with the strikes. The background to the socio-economic position of Black workers appeared in last year's *Black Review*. And since the wider focus during the year rested on the workers' strikes we consider it appropriate to give special attention to the strikes.

Again, as last year, concentration in this chapter on the position of the African workers has been considered a priority. The strikes were mainly staged by African workers and their legal status is treated differently by the statutory laws governing labour.

The strikes were prompted by wage demands. Stimulated by the brick workers at the Coronation Brick and Tile factory in Durban, Black workers organised strike action that swept throughout the country. These strikes may be said to have culminated in the police shootings at Carletonville. The 'tribal clashes', as called by the white press, originated in the working and living conditions of the 'migrant' workers who are engaged by the mines as contract labour recruited through 'Bantu' labour bureaux in the 'homelands'.

The Black Allied Workers' Union (BAWU) had its work hampered by the banning of its Secretary-General, Mr Drake Koka. This came after only seven months of BAWU's existence.

SASO's Black Workers Project also suffered setbacks because of Government bannings against SASO leaders and field workers.

The Black workers nevertheless continued to make their power potential felt through the widespread strikes that erupted all over the country through the year.

Strike at T.W. Beckett and Co.

On the 12 January, 1973, more than 100 factory workers employed by T.W. Beckett and Co., Ltd, a Durban Tea blending and packaging company, in Point Road, were paid off after they had stopped work when their request for higher wages was refused.

Armed police, some with dogs, arrived on the scene in a small fleet of cars and vans and stood by at the rear of the building in case of trouble, while the workers were being paid off.

Employees said the management had told them that it was not prepared to give them a rise. They were given 10 minutes in which to make a decision. Those who wished to work were told to re-enter the factory and the rest were paid off. No fixed amount as to how much of an increase was stipulated. The exact number of workers paid off was not available as the management refused to comment on the stoppage. According to those who stopped work, only about 15 men remained in the factory.

The men were paid R10,54 a week and some had worked for the company for 15 to 20 years. The workers said that the factory might cease production as the majority of those who stopped work were skilled workers, machine operators and others in the blending and packaging department.

Many are reported to have said that they only managed to run their homes by borrowing money from money-lenders who charged exorbitant rates.

Results of the Strike

On 15 January T.W. Beckett and Co., asked workers dismissed after the wage strike the previous week to return to the factory for possible 're-instatement'. The request followed the sacking of more than half the company's 150 tea workers and an investigation by the Department of Labour into the events which led to the dismissal.

The mass dismissal led to the company, which blends and packs tea and coffee, operating on skeleton staff. There was also a shut-down of some machinery. It was believed that the situation prompted the company to make the request. Of the 91 sacked only 56 were reinstated whilst the remaining 35 were weeded out.

control of the Inanda circuit. School fees, including a development fund, amounted to R5 a year, and books for 'about R18' were required for first formers. The cost of books was R20 a year, after that.

In addition parents were exhorted to abide by uniform regulations and informed that these could be obtained at a 'reasonable price'.

The drivers, who said they would return to the company's depot at the New Westmead Industrial Township, were demanding a guaranteed minimum of R40 a week. They claimed that a week could pass without a job becoming available, and that meant they got nothing. This applied to 'casual' workers who constituted the greatest part of a work force of about 275 men. Permanent drivers were set to get a basic wage of R13 plus the R5-a-trip wage.

The police were called to the scene when the men demanded that all Blacks employed by the firm also join them in the street outside the company's gates. No incident, however, took place and by the afternoon the dismissed workers began slowly moving off. They were promised 75% increase on each trip. Bloemfontein branch drivers who were called to replace the Pinetown depot drivers also refused the wage offer and joined the strike. As negotiations continued drivers claimed they had individual contracts with Motorvia guaranteeing a minimum of R15 a week. They said they often earned less.

The director of Bantu Administration in Pinetown, Mr T.F. Engelbrecht, confirmed such contracts were held by his department, which had the power to investigate complaints and enforce the minimum wage stipulated.

Results of the Strike

275 African convoy drivers were sacked when they rejected a compromise wage increase. But minutes after dismissing the 'striking' drivers the managing director of the Pinetown depot, Mr P.J. Marais, increased his earlier offer by 75c a trip to Johannesburg.

The drivers refused the fresh offer and demanded a guaranteed wage of R15 a week and a minimum of R5 a trip. Mr Marais said the two-day stoppage cost the company thousands of rands in turnover. He did not know where he could find replacements for the drivers.

The wages offered by Marais increased the pay for a trip to Upington by R3, bringing it up to R12. The pay for taking a car to Port Elizabeth was increased by R2 to R8. The pay for a Johannesburg trip remained unchanged.

The Frametex Mill Strike—New Germany

On 25 January 1973 production ground to a standstill at four mills of the

Frame Group at New Germany as hundreds of disgruntled workers laid down tools in demand for increased wages.

The mills were Frametex, Saltex, Nortex and Natal Knitting Mills; workers were pressing for weekly wages of R20 for men and R14 for women. Production at Frametex stopped at about 11 a.m. when the staff on the 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. shift quit.

One Indian man in the spinning section was approached by six African men and told to 'go out'. He was then hit across the shoulder blades with a machine belt. The man was reported to have said that he had been told by the Africans not to return to work until the wage demands had been met. Several other Indians were assaulted with belts and batons.

Some Indians said they had decided to stop work as they were scared of reprisals, but others admitted they were behind the Africans. 'We are happy that the Africans, by demanding higher wages, are doing some good for us', said one.

After the shift-quitting, stick wielding men and women 'strikers' from the Frametex factory marched and sang outside the factory's gates. They were joined by workers from the other three factories swelling the number of 'strikers' to about 2 500. Workers on the morning shift were prevented from taking buses home and told to stay until workers on the afternoon shift arrived.

A group of policemen with dogs stood-by, but there were no incidents. Several members of the security police were also present. There was an uneasy quiet outside the factory—but it was short-lived. When workers arrived for the afternoon shift they refused to work and formed a milling crowd outside. Some of them broke sticks from trees and chanted and danced about 100 yards away from the main factory gates. There were cries of: 'We are now a united nation' and 'Usutu'. They banged against parked vehicles and jeered at police cars. Some bottles were smashed on the road and a few stones thrown at the factory fence. They however refused to elect a negotiation committee.

Amongst other grievances they claimed:

1. That their basic wage was between R5 and R8 a week but their rent alone was as much as R12 for one room.
2. Bus fares cost anything from 8 cents to 54 cents a day.
3. They were not provided with uniforms.
4. R1,50 was deducted from their wages if late and R4 if absent.
5. Medical certificates were not recognised.
6. Transkei 'citizens' claimed they were promised an increase every three months but they never had it.

Results of the Strike

As a result of the strike immediate increases were given to the 7 000 workers at the Consolidated Frame Cotton Corporation in New Germany and brought to an end the four-day stoppage for higher pay.

A Mr W.H. Seligman, senior director for the Frame group of companies, said increases for the cotton division were being introduced throughout the country. Across the board increases ranging from R1,75 to R3 a week were announced at mass meetings in front of the four New Germany mills which had been closed down.

While senior management, labour officials and interpreters addressed the hundreds of workers reporting for the first shift at 5.30 a.m. a large force of police patrolled the area. There were no incidents, although at one stage workers at Saltex mill shouted, 'we don't want it', meaning the announced increase, and advanced on the management, who beat a hasty retreat into the factory.

The new rates of pay applied to the entire staff of the company, which is divided into seven different categories. The R1 a week attendance bonus had been discarded throughout. Wages for women in the lowest grade had been increased from R5 a week to a guaranteed minimum of R7. Spinners then began on a basic minimum of R9 instead of R6.

S. Pedlar and Co.,

On 29 January 1973 the women employed by S. Pedlar and Co., of New Germany, went on strike at 9 a.m. bringing the factory to a standstill. The firm, which is in Kinsman Road, and does weaving and mending, employed 22 women.

The workers told the *Daily News* (29/1/73) that their starting wage was R4,50 a week. They demanded an immediate R10-a-week increase.

Sugar Cane Workers

On 29 January the sugar cane workers were on strike at the Westbrook Estate. According to the managing director of Natal Estates Ltd., Mr R.K. Ridgeway, it was 'highly likely' that the 'strikers' wage demands would be met.

The strike was being staged by 180 'Pondo' workers, according to a statement released by the Hulletts organisation P.R.O. on behalf of Mr Ridgeway.

According to the statement the 'strikers' were asking for a basic wage of R15 a calendar month. Their then R15 wage was paid for 30 working days, 'but with the addition of cane-cutting bonuses many of them earn R60 per month'.

Results of the Strike

Mr Ron Phillips, P.R.O. of the Hulletts organisation, said the stoppage affected 10% of the total labour force at the sugar estate.

The Natal sugar industry's 20 000 contract workers were in line for a 20% wage increase after a recommendation by the Sugar Industry Labour Organisation Pty. Ltd., (SILO) was accepted by large estates.

The recommended increase meant a rise in the basic rate of workers, mainly cane-cutters, to 60c a day. With the various bonuses paid by individual companies, cane-cutters could earn up to R60 per month. Workers would have additional benefits such as free housing, rations and medical attention.

The 20% wage increase recommended by SILO would come into effect from the commencement of the 1973-74 harvesting season.

The Natal Canvas Rubber Manufacturers' Ltd.

On 29 January a three-to-four cents a week deduction from wages for sick benefit funds sparked off a total work stoppage by the 650 African and Indian workers at Natal Canvas Rubber Manufacturers Ltd., in Umngeni Road, Durban.

Mr Selwyn Lurie, financial director of the Frame Group, to which the company belongs, blamed a small group of 'agitators' for the total stoppage. He said the 'ball started rolling' the previous Friday when some of the workers objected to the deduction.

The first shift at 6 a.m. started work normally but, about 10 minutes after the second shift began at 7.15 a.m. the 180 to 200 workers on that shift stopped work. They demanded an immediate increase and also wanted an immediate answer.

Mr Lurie said the lowest category of worker employed by the firm was earning R11,22 a week. The average wage was between R15 and R16, and some workers earned above R20. He further stated that the increase in subscriptions for sick benefit funds was an agreed arrangement between representatives of employers and employees on the National Industrial Council for the leather industry.

Results of the Strike

The workers were offered pay for the time they had been on strike as well as an additional R1 wage increase which would have raised the lowest wage to R12,22. They refused the increased wage offer until the new agreement came into effect.

Police were called in to see the 'strikers' leave the factory in an orderly manner. On 31 January the workers accepted the R1 increase offer and returned to work.

Consolidated Woolwashing and Processing Mill—Pinetown

On 29 January, about 300 Indian and African women sorters refused a pay rise announced at the Consolidated Woolwashing and Processing Mill in Gillitts Road and were sent home after their job cards were collected. They were told an announcement would be made the following day.

The Woolwashing is part of the Frame group, and one of the group's senior directors, Mr W.H. Seligman, was there. He claimed the strike was the result of agitation, and said the Frame group paid the rates determined by the Industrial Council agreement controlling the flock industry. These were R6,35 a week increasing by 21c to R7,55.

Claims of agitation were emphatically denied by a group of about 80 Indian women, who earlier insisted that the Mill's security gates be opened and their group allowed outside. Once outside they told *Daily News* reporters that they were intimidated and were 'also fighting for our rights'. Among the group of women were workers who claimed they had been at the mill for more than 20 years.

Hume Ltd.

This was the second factory to close down on 29 January in Gillitts Road, Durban. The pipe factory, which employed more than 600 African workers, closed when the workers rejected a 90c a week increase.

A company spokesman, Mr J.R. Cammell, was reported to have said in a statement issued from Johannesburg: 'All the 'non-white' employees numbering 160 at the Pinetown branch of Hume Ltd., left their jobs after presenting management with unacceptable across-the-board wage demands. These employees have been advised that wage demands will be discussed when they all return to duty'. On 31 they returned to work and negotiations went on.

The Consolidated Textile Mill—Jacobs

On 31 January about 1 000 'striking' African and Indian workers were locked out of the Frame Group's Consolidated Textile Mill at Jacobs, Durban, after they had refused to elect a committee to negotiate their demands with the management.

The Consolidated workers rejected an appeal by the Department of Labour's 'Bantu' Labour 'officer', Mr J. Skene, and were locked out after they began singing the National Anthem 'Nkosi Sikelela l'Afrika'.

Police stood by but the crowd was mainly good-humoured and laughed at appeals to negotiate their grievances. The workers began dispersing after the doors were locked at about 9.30 a.m., but a small group remained, clutching umbrellas and sheltering from the rain against the mill's security walls.

No clear demands were made but some workers told *Daily News* reporters they were getting R4 a week. Some wanted R5 a week more whilst others wanted a maximum of R30 a week.

The Afritex Mill—Jacobs

On 31 January at the Frame Group's Afritex mill at Jacobs workers were sent home after a negotiating committee refused to encourage 'striking' workers to return to work while wage talks continued.

The strike committee elected at the Afritex Mills rejected appeals by Mr Skene and the mill's management to get workers back inside the mill with an assurance that wage negotiations would then continue.

One of the committee members, Mr W. Warren, said: 'They asked us to go back to work and while we were at work said they would negotiate, but we told them the workers were adamant and wanted to know immediately what the increases would be' (*Daily News*, 31/1/71). The Afritex workers clocked out and said they were told to return to work the following day.

National Chemical Products—Durban

On 31 January one of Durban's largest chemical factories, National Chemical Products, was brought to a standstill when about 300 African workers downed tools and walked out demanding higher wages.

The workers at the National Chemical Plant at Sea Cow Lake walked out from the factory which produces yeast, cattle feeds, methylated spirits, cane spirits and paint. They gathered outside the firm's administration block and demanded that their weekly wages be increased by R10.

One of the workers was reported to have said that he was told their demands could not be met and those who did not wish to stay with the company would be paid off. The workers seemed undecided and stood in the rain talking among themselves.

Other Strikes on 31 January

The following companies, in and around Durban were affected by total or partial work stoppages:

1. United Oil and Cake Mills Ltd., Mobeni.
2. Bakers Ltd., Durban.
3. Defy Industries Ltd., Umgeni.
4. Polycrate (Pty.) Ltd., New Germany.
5. Glen's Removal and Storage Ltd., Pinetown.
6. Congella Erection Co., (Natal) (Pty.) Ltd., Pinetown.
7. Cupercola Ltd., New Germany.
8. J. Wright and Sons, Jacobs.
9. Tri-Ang Pedigree, Mobeni.

STRIKES ON 1 FEBRUARY 1973

Colgate-Palmolive Ltd.—Boksburg

On 1st February 1973, Colgate-Palmolive Ltd., dismissed the entire African staff in its laboratory and quality control departments at Boksburg after they stopped work in support of demands for higher pay.

Eleven employees had submitted a petition asking for an increase of 20c an hour. They told the management they had wanted an answer by 11 a.m. the previous day. When none was forthcoming, they stopped work.

One of them was quoted as having said: 'We were called one by one to see the personnel manager, who told us our case would be considered if we applied as individuals' (*Rand Daily Mail* 2/2/73).

When they insisted their pay claims be considered as one, they were given the choice of returning to work or resigning. 'We decided to resign, but when we offered our resignations we were told we were being summarily dismissed'.

Elgin Metal Products—Jacobs

More than 200 Africans employed by Elgin Metal Products (Pty.) Ltd., in Voortrekker Street, Jacobs, went out on 'strike' soon after arriving at work that morning.

The workers at the factory downed tools after their 9 a.m. tea break and called on the management to give them higher wages. The workers gathered outside the company's offices and, despite attempts by Mr Jerry Turner, the managing director, to address them, they refused to return to work unless they were given increases. Soon afterwards the SAP arrived at the factory and the crowd dispersed quietly. It was not known exactly how much the African workers demanded.

A spokesman for the company said that he could not comment. 'It is an internal dispute which will be negotiated through the proper channels'.

By 10 a.m. there were only a few Africans standing outside the factory building with their belongings. The rest had already gone home, to Kwa-Mashu and Umlazi. A squad car stood by. However the labour force was to get its weekly pay later that day and the police were expected to remain in the area when the people returned. Indian employees said that the 'strike' had been spontaneous that morning.

Blaikie Johnstone—Jacobs

At the Blaikie-Johnstone factory in Jacobs, hundreds of workers gathered in the street and refused an appeal to elect a 'strike' committee. One of the workers was reported to have shown a *Daily News* reporter an inexpensive silver watch with the inscription: 'In appreciation for 35 years service'. The

worker also presented a company wage slip to show that he had earned R7,50 the previous week. This followed deductions from his gross earnings which were R10,12.

The Blaikie manager said the strike was a 'blow', as he thought his company had always enjoyed good relations with the staff.

Falkirk Iron Company—Jacobs

Several hundred African workers employed by the Durban Falkirk Iron Company at Jacobs went on 'strike' shortly after 6 a.m. Workers were reported to have said that wages varied between R9 and R13 a week. One said he was being paid only R12,60 after 13 years.

Workers had thus far refused to elect a committee to negotiate with the department of labour. They left the factory shortly after 11 a.m. after being told to go home, and that wages would be discussed the coming Monday.

Hebox—Hammarsdale

About 200 workers at Hebox in Hammarsdale—the night shift—refused to enter the factory. They demanded a R3 a week increase. A spokesman for the firm said the morning shift had gone to work without incidents and they were waiting for the night shift to arrive at 3 p.m.

STRIKES ON 2 FEBRUARY

Rowen Ltd.,—Mobeni—worked with skeleton labour.

Dunlop (South Africa) Ltd.—Durban

At Dunlop (S.A.) Ltd., 1 300 workers left the factory. The Dunlop Works director, Mr J.K. Brammage, said about 150 African operators out of 1 300 had left their jobs and gathered in groups outside the factory. 'Unfortunately, demands for increased wages were presented', Mr Brammage said. The Dunlop statement claimed that most employees were prepared to work but were afraid of 'intimidation'. Workers refused to nominate a spokesman and went home.

Ropes and Mattings

The Ropes and Mattings factory closed down when 2 800 refused to return to their jobs.

The managing director of Ropes and Mattings (Pty.) Ltd., Mr J. Briscoe, alleged that most employees were prepared to work but were afraid of intimidation. As a result production came to a standstill after negotiations failed.

General Chemical Corporation (Coasted) Ltd.

This factory came to a standstill when most of its workers downed tools.

Mr M.P. Theunissen, director of General Chemical, would not say how many Africans had gone on strike but added that the majority of the workers had downed tools and that police had been called.

Crossley Carpets

Crossley Carpets, a subsidiary of the giant Feltex group, closed down and there were partial stoppages at other factories in the group.

Consolidated Textile Mills—East London

At the Consolidated Textile Mills, a member of the Frame Group in East London, of the 3 300 workers, more than 1 000 walked out forcing the management to close one section of the factory. They had asked for an increase in their weekly wages, which ranged from R3,80 to R5,50 for women and R6,50 to R7,50 for men. They demanded a minimum wage of R15.

The Chairman of the Frame Group, Mr P. Frame, said that he thought part of the East London factory had closed down and that if he said anything 'it could only aggravate the position' (*Rand Daily Mail* 3/2/73).

Other Stoppages

Hart Ltd.—700 workers demanded higher pay.

Phil Williams Pty.—Durban—400 workers.

Ensor Plastics Pty., Ltd.—Durban—50 workers.

Airco Engineering Ltd.—Wentworth.

Consolidated Fine Spinners and Weavers.

Natal Underwear Manufacturers.

Pinetown Engineering Foundry.

Madadeni Transport—Newcastle, Natal.

Timbrick Model Homes.

Federated South African Meat Industries

At the Federated South African Meat Industries in Maydon Wharf, Durban's largest wholesale meat suppliers, management had urgent discussions with workers' representatives on wage demands on 8 February. But a spokesman for the firm said there had been no work stoppages.

Federated Meat supply about 80% of Durban's hotels and many large supermarkets. (*Daily News* 5/2/73).

Flat Cleaners' Strike

Cleaners in at least one beachfront block of flats went on strike on 5 February. About 50 men employed at Grosvenor Court, which has 222 flats, left the building after apparently asking for higher wages.

The superintendent of the block refused to comment and a spokesman for Standard Investment Corporation, which administers the block, said he had not yet been told of the strike.

The Durban Corporation's labourers' Strike

Many essential services in Durban were paralysed on 5 February, when more than 3 000 of the Durban Corporation's African labourers went on 'strike'. The 'strike' brought to a halt key services in the City Engineer's Department, including road and drain works and sections of the cleaning division. The strike also spread to the city's electrical department.

'Strikers', who gathered outside the labour office of the City Engineer's Department, in Old Fort Place, allegedly threatened to burn down the office unless the African labour clerks stopped work. They were also said to have threatened any labourer who did not go on strike.

Many workers who had already begun work early were called to join a shouting, fist and stick-waving procession of 'strikers' marching along Umngeni Road towards the City Engineer's Department.

The crowd stopped a refuse removal truck in the street and threatened the African workers, who fled and were chased several blocks by the 'strikers' who brandished knobkerries.

The workers were demanding an immediate increase of R10 a week. Their average basic weekly wage was about R13. Many made demands to the City Engineer's African labour officer Mr M.S. Dunbar, who told them a special meeting of the City Council would be held the following morning to decide on wage increases. Many left after Mr Dunbar spoke, but most stayed in a car park behind the City Licencing Department. A co-ordinating body of the various departments' works committees was also convened.

The strike came barely a week after the council had announced it was considering general wage increases for all its Black workers. Under discussion was a minimum weekly increase of R1,10. Included in the work force were plumbers, carpenters, brick layers, main layers and connection hands.

Results of the Strike

Durban Corporation decided to cut red tape and gave its Black employees an immediate wage increase averaging about 15% at a cost of R920 000. The decision was taken at an emergency meeting and was expected to have

added a minimum of R2 a week to the 'wage' packets of about 16 000 employees. However the increase was rejected.

The City Engineer's Department, the Electricity Department, the Department of Parks and Gardens were all affected and the city's rubbish removal services had been brought almost to a standstill.

More than 200 tons of perishable fresh products were liable to rot at Durban's Market railhead. An appeal was made to farmers not to continue consigning highly perishable produce as the amount of unloaded produce in 40 five-tons trucks which was still at the railhead represented 70% of the total produce usually unloaded each day. This information was supplied by the Director of Markets, Mr B.J. Johnson.

Police used batons for the first time when they arrested 106 stick-wielding African 'strikers' who refused to break up a march.

Trouble broke out in the afternoon after over 1 000 'strikers' dispersed from outside the labour offices of the City Engineer's Department and marched down Alice Street, bringing traffic to a halt. They were armed with sticks and chanting 'Usutu' (a Zulu battle cry) as they marched through the street. One police car followed them. The large group stopped at the bus ranks for a short while but continued to march to the Dalton Road location and beer hall. Some drinkers were beaten up after they had refused to join the procession.

A large posse of police armed with sten guns, service rifles, FN rifles and batons followed and intercepted them near the City Electricity Department in Alice Street. A police officer spoke to them through a loud hailer and asked them to disperse, but the police were jeered as the 'strikers' rushed across the street. A large convoy of police vehicles drove behind the chanting 'strikers' who headed towards Umgeni Road.

About three kilometres from where they were stopped and asked to disperse, the 'strikers' were charged by the police. Some were beaten with batons about their bodies and several fell to the ground. All the 'strikers' were disarmed and made to sit on the pavement as police encircled them.

They were then coaxed into two troop-carriers and four pick-up vans and taken to the Somtseu Road Police Station.

On 7 February 102 of the City Council 'strikers' were fined R30 or 30 days in the Magistrate's Court for disturbing the peace. The Magistrate, Mr R.K. Gordon, suspended R25 (25 days) of the fine imposed on each of the men for 12 months. Conditions of suspension were that they were not convicted on any similar offence or any offence involving violence to persons or property during the period of suspension.

Main Tin Manufacturers

On 5 February a wholly-owned subsidiary of Metal Box, Main Tin Manu-

facturers, at Mobeni was affected by a stoppage when about 500 African and Indian workers downed tools.

King George V Hospital—Sydenham

On 5 February male African domestic staff and some labourers at the King George V Hospital for TB in Sydenham stopped work while they held a meeting over wage grievances. They returned to work after being addressed by their compound manager.

Others affected by strikes on 5 February

Chemical Corporation—176 workers struck.

Amalgamated Packing Industry—500 workers.

Simba Chips—21 workers.

Acme—220 workers.

THE HAMMARSDALE STRIKES

(a) *Glazier Clothing*: This factory mainly employs female workers. On the morning of 7 February the women refused to start work but stood at the factory gate and laid wage demands. It was not clear how much was being demanded. General feeling placed it at four rands. The women stated some of them had been with the factory for up to 3 years but were only getting less than R10,00 per week. Some were earning as low as below R7,00.

Chances of a rise in promotion were remote. The better paid and experienced workers worked under pressure of instant dismissal; so that, as they put it, they had to be re-engaged at a low basic wage. The overriding need for a strike, they said, was that the cost of living had gone high. The menfolk were also demanding pay at the other factories. And they needed the money.

The women thenceforth left and, chanting in the street, moved towards the other factories to converge with the other workers.

(b) *Progress Clothing* and

(c) *Supreme Knitting*

The workers did not go back into the factory after morning break. By eleven most of the workers had left the premises after telling the bosses they were not satisfied with the pay. The Progress factory employs women mostly; and Supreme Knitting Mills have male workers. Both factories share common premises.

A portion of the men and women singing and shouting slogans marched to the gate of the Neckelmann factory on the other side of the road and demanded solidarity from the Neckelmann workers through strike action.

After being warned against 'disturbing' on Neckelmann premises they remained on their factories' side of the road and continued throwing slogans.

The Neckelmann Strike

The growing agitation amongst the workers burst out after morning tea when workers gathered in groups. Until the attention of the white supervisory and management staff was aroused.

Workshop workers went into the workshop and stated their wage claims. The Personnel Manager was called in to negotiate. He promised the workers R2,00 increase provided they did not go on strike. The workers' response was uncompromising—R2,00 was not enough. They demanded more.

During the negotiations with the workshop workers, the Dye house workers had already downed tools and were walking out of the factory gates. They claimed that solidarity with the other factories was at that time more a priority than having to stipulate how much they felt they needed.

The other departments had also reached deadlock position. By 12 noon all the workers had left the factory and stood at the gate together with workers from the other factories who had come to ask them join the strikes. A flood of workers from the other factories: Durban Knitting, Hebox, Linofra, Gelvenor, Natal Thread etc., moved down the road towards the shopping area. A group went to join the Rainbow Chicken workers who were still negotiating on wages.

Gelvenor Textiles (Pty.) Ltd.—Hammarsdale

On 6 February strict security measures were imposed at factory entrances when large groups of chanting, stick waving workers milled about in the streets waiting for their demands for higher wages. They had demanded R3 to R5 increase.

Factory officials were seen addressing their labourers in streets outside the factories. They were given a good hearing but their offers were rejected.

An International Knitting Mill official offered women workers an average increase of 95c a week and told them that they report for work at 7 a.m. the following day. The women had demanded a R5 increase.

One 'striker' was reported to have said unskilled workers were paid R4 to R7 a week.

Rainbow Chicken

At the Rainbow Chicken Factory workers walked out leaving thousands of half-dressed chickens in vats. This occurred after Rainbow increased wages the previous week to avert a strike. Throughout the day police (as usual)

watched proceedings from a distance. At no stage were more than five police vehicles in the area.

A refreshment tent was erected in the area that night to serve police who patrolled the area throughout the night.

On Wednesday 7, virtually all the Hammarsdale factories, including factories such as Shield overalls, Reindeer Products, Dano Mills, had joined in a one day general strike in the whole of Hammarsdale.

Despite small clashes with the police and the use of tear gas the strikes dragged on until Friday. On Wednesday the workers resolved to stand together against their employers. This came at a time when the workers had heard, on the 8, that the Natal Wages Board was in sitting at Pietermaritzburg. This rumour made the workers all the more adamant in their stand.

Results of the Strikes

Almost all the factories were back into operation by noon on Monday 13. Police cauldrons trapped the workers into the factories at some places. All the same, negotiations varied according to the different factories. At one factory the basic starting wage was put at R11,00 whilst others agreed to start their workers at R17,00. Those factories offering more than R11,00 basic rates reached compromise of between R2,00 and R5,00 increase. It was an uneasy truce. By the end of 1973, airs of discontent were steadily spreading from the factories.

R.H. Morris (Natal) (Pty.) Ltd.

70 African labourers of the building concern, R.H. Morris, downed tools and were paid off on 6 February 1973. The labourers stopped work shortly before 8 a.m. at the site of a new school being built at Tara Road, Wentworth.

By 3 p.m. most workers had collected their pay. They indicated they would return to work the following day or later in that week. Mr R. Hughes, a director, said the labourers had asked for more pay without specifying any amount and that 'our wages are governed by the Industrial Council, a government body, and therefore the wage levels are fixed' (*Rand Daily Mail* 7/2/73).

Coca-Cola—Durban

Production at the Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Durban stopped on 6 February when more than 100 Black workers suddenly quit the works premises. A senior executive in Johannesburg, Mr R. Renoud, said the work stoppage had come as a surprise. 'We imagine it is part of the labour unrest in Natal' (*Rand Daily Mail* 7/2/73).

Clover Dairy

There were no door-to-door deliveries of Clover Dairies' milk on 7 February and supplies to firm's depot and to tearooms were limited and late. Clover's main factory at Congella was crippled when its 500 African employees stopped work and went on strike for higher wages.

Processing of all non-essential products such as cheese, butter and yoghurt was suspended and white employees manned the machines for bottling milk in litre-size only. They (whites) were sent to farm areas to bring in milk in bulk.

Office workers, mechanics and foremen doubled as drivers when vehicles were moved away from the vicinity of the African compound for 'security' reasons.

During that afternoon there was considerable traffic congestion as members of the public and wholesalers came to buy milk from the factory. 'A limited amount of milk was processed', said Mr B. Laing, assistant general manager, Natal. 'But if African workers did not report for duty the following morning, the company would have had great difficulty in getting out any worthwhile quantities' he added.

The company had also asked for troops to help with the distribution.

Durban Abattoir—7 February 1973

Durban's abattoir ground to a halt when the 700 Africans employed by the Durban Corporation and United Flying and Dressing Co., (Pty.) Ltd., stopped work, leaving whites to deal with the animals which had already been slaughtered.

Just after 5 a.m. when 177 cattle and 629 sheep (about a quarter of a day's normal slaughter) had been killed, African workers of United Flying decided to stop work. However, following negotiations with the management, the workers decided to return to work but by then Corporation employees had decided to join other municipal workers and downed tools.

The director of the abattoir, Dr F.E. Cavanagh, addressed the workers, who at that time received a minimum wage of R15 a week. He told them they would receive an increase possibly to R18. The workers, however, did not return to work.

Effects of the Strike

That strike brought the abattoir to a standstill and white 'workers' volunteered to process the meat which had already been slaughtered.

The reserve stock at the abattoir then was 1 367 cattle (approximately two days' supply), 3 247 sheep (usually the kill for one day) and 777 pigs

(two days' supply). Mr E.O. Jones, general manager of Stock Owners' Co-operative Co. Ltd., said: 'We do not know how many people are going to continue railing when there is this uncertainty, but as soon as we have clarification from the municipality, we will be in a position to advise our farmers what to do' (*Mercury* 8/2/73).

The price of meat was not expected to be affected, but any supplies brought in from other provinces could only be done so through permit from the Meat Industry Control Board.

Goodhope Pipe—Pietermaritzburg

About 100 Africans left work at the Goodhope Pipe Factory to consider a pay rise offer on 8 February. A spokesman for the Indian-owned company, the first to be hit in the capital, said about half the work force went home to consider the management's offer of a R2,50 a week rise.

The Seven-T-Construction (Pty.) Ltd.

On 12 February, about 100 Africans employed by Seven-T-Construction (Pty.) Ltd. went on strike for higher wages at Effingham.

The workers told newsmen they wanted a R5 increase in pay. They are also reported to have said they were very unhappy about the fact that they could earn as little as R1 a week if the weather stopped work for a few days.

As usual, several police vehicles were called to the strike scene and workers were told to go home and come back the following day when they would be told about the company's decision.

The ZFP Strike—Empangeni, Zululand

On 27 February, more than 200 African women packers from the giant fruit and vegetable canners ZFP at Empangeni went on strike. They were joined later by about 50 men, and the people claimed, the factory was at a standstill.

Mr Ivor Ferreira, the manager of the company refused to comment. 'I would rather not make a statement at all' he said (*Daily News* 27/2/73).

Headed by Captain C.J. Botes, the station commander at Empangeni, police with dogs stood by outside the factory gates (as usual) where the crowd of strikers assembled. There were no incidents.

Most of the women said they earned an average of R3 a week. Some said they earned only R2. They wanted blanket increases to take their wages to a minimum of R5 a week. They had not told the management of their demands yet.

Shortly before 10 o' clock, the crowd of women started shrieking and chanting when a small group of men spearheaded a walkout by the male staff and joined the strike. As the men walked through the gate, the women

shouting 'Usutu' and 'bravo' kissed and hugged them and patted them on their backs. The men left the factory in ones and twos for about 20 minutes. Everyone was forced to run the gauntlet of shrieking women. Most of the men continued into Empangeni Rail area where they dispersed.

One of the workers was reported (*Daily News* 27/2/73) as having said the men earned a basic wage of R6 a week. He added that after the women refused to enter the factory there was a discussion among the men and it was decided that they too, would demand increases. He said the men were addressed by Mr Ferreira, who told them there was no money available to meet their demands and that there was nothing he could do.

Captain Botes, accompanied by an 'officer' of the security police, entered the factory, apparently to discuss the situation with the management.

The women remained outside the factory gates, singing, dancing and waving makeshift white flags. Some walked up and down, chanting, 'Unity is strength, eendrag maak mag'.

The Feltex Ltd. Walkout

On 5 March 1973, the entire factory staff of the footwear division of Feltex Ltd., walked out saying they would not return unless a new wage agreement became effective thenceforth.

Trouble started when details were announced of the negotiated wage agreement for the footwear section of the National Industrial Council of the Leather Industry. The announcement said labourers' wages would get a 20% increase.

The agreement would take effect on 1 July and would remain in force until 30 June, 1975. The workers then demanded immediate increases and remained adamant even after lengthy talks with the management.

Sappi—Mandini

Thousands of African men, urged on by chanting women, rocked vehicles and smashed bus windows at a road block in the Sundumbile Location near Mandini, Zululand on 12/3/73 after hundreds of labourers stopped work at the giant SAPPI Tugela Mill.

Policemen in 15 vehicles including an armoured truck waited at the main entrance to the township near the mill. The manager of the mill, Mr A. Rodger, said the trouble began at midnight on Sunday (11 March 1973) when labourers stopped work and went home. He said about 1 000 of the 2 000 Africans employed there downed tools.

'I met a delegation from the works committee this morning (13/3/73). They said they would not return to work until we agreed to pay a minimum of R1 per hour', Mr Rodger said (*Mercury*, 13/3/73). He further said employees were given a wage rise at the beginning of that month (March).

They would have received the increases in their wages on March 14.

Early on the afternoon of 12 March, police watched from a hill overlooking the township only a kilometre from the mill as thousands of African men and women gathered on the outskirts of the location.

Bush fires were started in the long grass between the mill and the township and groups rampaged up and down the hill.

White and Indian employees kept the mill operating during the night, according to security guards. The mill management told all Africans to return to work the following morning (13/3/73).

Results of the Strike

On 14 March, the strike ended and all 2 000 men who went on a three-day strike were back to work. The mill manager, Mr A. Rodger, said everything was back to normal on that day. All the workers had arrived and nobody had been paid off.

The strike came to an abrupt end when Mr B.J. Dladla, KwaZulu executive councillor of community affairs, addressed the workers at the Sundumbile Township. Speaking after a meeting with the mill management he told the workers an increase of R2,44 a week had been offered. Amid tumultuous applause the offer was accepted and workers began filing back to the mill.

During the strike, which was watched by a horde of police (as usual), the mill was kept at full production by 400 white and 100 Indian workers.

Strachan Construction

About 45 African workers employed by Strachan Construction on the site of the new bridge which was being built across the railway lines at Avoca went on strike shortly after 7 a.m. on 12 February, 1973.

They downed tools and decided to walk to the company's head office in Edwin Swales VC Drive to put their demands to the management. They are reported (*Daily News* 12/2/73) to have said that they were earning R18 a fortnight and wanted their hourly rate increased from 19c to 27c.

They further said the management offered to pay 24c for unregistered workers and 26c for registered workers. No spokesman was available for Seven-T-Construction.

Alex Carriers—Pietermaritzburg

Police were called when 80 African labourers went on strike at Alex Carriers, a firm of transport contractors in Pietermaritzburg.

The men refused to begin to work and gathered outside the gates of the transport depot at Pentrich demanding higher wages. There were no incidents and the men sat quietly discussing their demands watched by about

20 white cops.

The workers were then paid a basic wage of between R6 and R7,70 a week and were demanding that it be raised from R10 to R13 a week.

The managing director of the firm, Mr A.D. Gilson, spoke to the strikers at the gates but refused to discuss their demands with the press.

Results of the Strike

About 40 of the workers lost their jobs when they refused to accept an 11% pay rise. Mr A.D. Gilson, managing director, said that about 30 other Africans had accepted the new terms and returned to work.

Municipal Busmen Strike—Johannesburg

On 14 February, the city municipal busdrivers went on a two-and-a-half-hour strike and continued working thereafter, after agreeing to wait until the following Monday, 19 February.

The chairman of the busmen's liason committee, Mr R.R. Bali, told municipal officials that threat of a strike was not over when he said: 'The men will go back to work pending agreement to their demands' (*Mercury*, 15/2/73).

The strike began at 5 a.m. when the busmen turned their backs on their supervisor when he ordered them to go on duty. About 50 policemen (as usual) under the command of Brigadier J.B. Wiese, District commandant for Johannesburg, surrounded the busyard as the men were urged to negotiate with city councillors, municipal and government labour officials.

Mr Reyniese, 'Bantu' labour officer of the Department of Labour, told the men that to strike would be illegal, and urged them to return to work for their own sake of the 'thousands who are trying to get to work today' (*Mercury* 15/2/73). He further warned them that if they struck they faced possible arrest under the Riotous Assemblies Act and the 'Bantu' labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act.

Mr Max Neppe, chairman of the council's utilities committee, asked the men to wait for the management committee's decision on their proposals.

The busmen wanted the council to backdate their agreed 21 to 27% increases to February 1.

Alternatively, they have agreed to wait until 1 July, on condition that the council then paid them an extra four cents an hour in addition to the increase.

Mr Neppe said the council was in a difficult position as it could not treat their case in isolation. In terms of the increases the lowest paid would rise R106 a month to R135, and the highest from R137 to R170. He urged the busmen to continue negotiating and to go back to work. He told them they

would be paid a full day's wages.

The white 'officials' withdrew and the busmen considered their position where they finally decided on a 'go-slow' strike until their demands were met.

Municipal Workers Strike—Stanger

On 12 February, at Stanger, in Natal, the entire municipal labour force of about 250 workers: road repairers and dustment, went on strike over wage demands.

By late afternoon of 13, the Town Council was still negotiating with the workers in the hope that they would return to work the following day (14 February). Mr J.E. Ritchie, the Town Clerk, said that the workers were talking in terms of R10 a week. Their then minimum basic wage was R6 a week or R30 a month. The workers rejected the offer of a twenty per cent increase in basic wages on 13 February. However, on 14 February, about 300 workers decided to accept the council's offer of a 25% rise and started work.

The Newspaper Workers' Strike—Johannesburg

About 80 African newspaper delivery van drivers went on strike in Johannesburg on 17 February, after negotiations with their employers had failed. The bargaining with the Allied Publishing Company in the basement of the company's premises in Laub Street failed after an hour's talk. The men then refused to work, until Monday 19 February when negotiations could be re-opened. Police and an 'official' of the Department of Labour stood by.

The drivers, who earned from R35 to R50 a week plus allowances, wanted a weekly minimum of R60. This was refused by the employers who threatened to sack the drivers who did not go back to work. Allied Publishing said that vans would be manned by white office 'workers' for the weekend, with the help of white 'casuals' and white mechanics. Allied Publishing warned the strikers that there would be trouble if colleagues were stopped from working. Some drivers had been forcibly pulled from their vans, they said.

The strike accelerated on 18 March 1973, when roundsmen and street-sellers either refused to work or failed to turn up. Those who did wish to work were 'intimidated' into joining the strike. On 19 February the newspaper-van drivers, newsvendors and delivery men eased the strike when they agreed to return to work.

Results of the Strike

Sales of the Sunday Times and the Sunday Express were affected by the

vendors' participation in the strike. There was no English language newspaper on sale at street corners. The paper could only be bought at cafes and News Agencies.

Other Results

Flying Squad cars patrolled the areas of Braamfontein, Hillbrow and the city centre, after reports of 'intimidation' had been received from street sellers on Saturday evening. There were no home deliveries of both daily and Sunday newspapers and an appeal was made to the public to buy its copies from cafes and News Agencies, where extra copies would be delivered.

The Milkmen's Strike—Johannesburg

On 15 March, thousands of shops and offices and households in Johannesburg's city centre, Soweto, Lenasia and the Western suburbs were without milk as African staff of Clover Dairies staged a one-day strike.

The men originally demanded R45 a week for drivers and R25 a week for crewmen. About 300 African drivers, crewmen and bottling workers at the company's Johannesburg depot in Mayfair went on strike.

Effects of the Strike

White men and women 'workers', with their Transvaal manager, Mr R.A. Reed, loaded crates and delivered milk on the company's 'strategic rounds', including the white Johannesburg General Hospital and the central city area. No milk was delivered to households. A radio appeal to private consumers and cafe owners to collect their milk was made.

Results

The men agreed to return to work at 10.30 after they were given a pay rise of R1 a week. Drivers from then were to earn R27 a week, and crewmen R17. Increases of about 4% and 6% respectively. A night allowance was still under negotiation.

A condition attached to the increases was that the staff take more care with bottles and crates. According to the Company, R10 000 a month was lost on bottles and R8 000 on crates.

Abkin Steel Corporation—Germiston

On 21 March, more than 100 Black workers at Germiston's Abkin steel factory downed tools when they went on strike for higher wages. Production at the scrap iron premises in Industria East came to a standstill when men, milling at the entrance of the factory at 7 a.m. refused to work.

The workers, all of them unskilled labourers, and most on contract from Zululand, received a R1 a week increase on Monday 19 March. They claimed that the increase was insufficient and wanted more money. Their

basic pay was R9,50 a week but most wages ranged between R10 and R15 a week. The firm's directors and 'officials' from the Department of Labour were negotiating with the workers that morning. Police were keeping watch on the situation and reported no incidents. However, the atmosphere was tense. The director of the firm, Mr Solly Abkin, said the firm could not afford to pay the 'strikers' higher wages until the price of scrap iron was increased.

Meanwhile blacklegging African drivers at the firm continued work that morning. They received increases ranging between R3 and R6 a week. They then earned about R40 a week.

However, the workers returned to work at 3.45 p.m. They were promised a full day's pay and that management would try to raise their wages.

The Trump Strike

Production at the Trump factory in Charlestown was reported to have come to a standstill with 700 workers, about 95% of the factory's labour force.

Police barred Pressmen from the strike area. But the workers who left to go to nearby shops were reported to have said the overall situation was quiet and that they would go back to work if given or promised more money.

One worker at Trump told a *Daily News* reporter she was being paid R4,50 a week after four years' service.

Veka—Charlestown

At this factory, half of the 1 000 workers who had returned to work without their pay demands being met, came out again on 22 March, when their colleagues at the Trump plant (reported above) went on strike.

The 3 000 Veka workers wanted higher wages, but by mid-day, they had not responded to invitations to elect spokesmen to discuss the issue with the management.

Production of certain men's wear was at a complete standstill as the workers—mainly women machinists, cutters and pressers—milled around the grounds of the factory.

Factory management at Charlestown declined to comment on the strike but Mr F. Truter, Veka's managing director, in Johannesburg, said he was confident that agreement would be reached by the end of that week, and that he was sure the strike was for higher wages.

On 30 March, 1973, the Veka strike ended with several hundreds starting work whilst all were expected back by 2 April. This was after it was learnt that the workers would get increases from 1 April when the new wage determination for the area would start operating. This then meant that any

employee who had been in the industry for four months would earn at least R4,80 a week from 1 April. Several hundred workers with more experience would be moving up one notch—up to the highest pay of R11,50—and the management had agreed to give workers already on the highest notch another 50c a week.

Alusaf—Richards Bay

One hundred 'national' servicemen went on shift at the Alusaf aluminium smelter amid growing opposition from the 500 African labourers who were boycotting the factory in support of their claim for higher wages.

The company secretary for Alusaf, Mr D. Maritz, said the army trainees had been put to work at the plant under supervision and were being trained while working at the job. Alusaf could be regarded as having strategic importance for South Africa because it was the only aluminium smelter in the country.

The moving in of the 'army' personnel was met with bitter opposition from the African 'strikers' who were demanding a wage rate of R1 an hour instead of their weekly average of R12. They had rejected the management's across-the-board offer of R2 a week increase.

On the 28/3/73 the workers were given an ultimatum by the management to be back at work by 9 a.m. that morning or face dismissal. However the workers were adamant that they would not return to work until they had seen Mr Dladla, whom they had asked to represent them in negotiations with the company.

Workers claimed that when their delegation told management they were seeking aid from the KwaZulu Government a senior official said: 'We are not prepared to listen to any KwaZulu leader. Richards Bay is not part of KwaZulu' (*Star* 28/3/73).

Mr Dladla saw the management but his appeal was unsuccessful and then undertook to inform his department that all applications for labour by Alusaf would in future have to have his personal approval. This was after all the workers had been paid off by the managing director, a Mr van Vuuren.

On 2 April all the paid-off workers were re-employed after they had acceded to the new rate which was offered the previous week and which the workers rejected. It constituted an increase across-the-board of R2,00 per week.

H.J. Henochsburg—Johannesburg

A 'strike' by 1 000 Black workers halted production at this factory after a wage dispute. The 'strike' only lasted for 5 hours after they returned to work at 12.30 that day. This was after they had been offered 5% increase from July, however they were not satisfied with the offer.

Ferrovom Investments—Alberton

On 2 April one of Alberton's largest factories came to a standstill when the African labour force of 250 refused to take up their posts in a move for higher wages.

Africans interviewed said their wages ranged between R9 and R11 a week. They wanted at least R18 a week. Labour 'officials', directors of the firm and Germiston's 'Bantu' Affairs Commissioner, Mr P.J. Cartens, had discussions and were expected to negotiate with the workers during that day. They were subsequently fired for 'striking' for higher wages.

As the broadly smiling Africans fled out of the main gate of the factory nearly 40 police armed with riot sticks, batons, revolvers and at least one hand machine carbine arrived at the scene. Four men were arrested.

Border Passenger Transport—East London

Industry and hospital services were disrupted throughout East London on 4 April when thousands of workers failed to turn up in time for work because of a strike by busdrivers.

The busdrivers were demanding R40 a week and had been meeting the management since 2 April. They were however taken to the Cambridge Police Station and taken into offices in tens and advised to return to work and thereafter released.

Other Strikes

About 85 African clothing workers staged a brief sitdown strike at the Jardin Desmonds factory.

At Brookfield Knitwear, 300 African and Coloured workers refused to start work at 7.30 a.m. Production was resumed at 10.00 a.m. after the management agreed to bring a 5% 'cost-of-living' increase into effect. The increase was scheduled for 1 July. In Germiston, a number of workers reportedly walked-out at New York Clothing Manufacturers.

At Kels Lingerie, Jeppestown, about 200 workers refused to work at 7.30 a.m. but resumed production after director, Mr S. Rosenthal, agreed to meet representatives.

About 100 employees at Italian Knitting Industries stopped work for an hour. The manager of the factory Mr L. Pisanello, said the management had agreed to bring in a 7½% increase scheduled for 1 July thenceforth.

Another 85 workers at Rhine Fashions stopped work from 7.45 a.m. to 9 a.m. The manager, Mr W. Stirling, met representatives of the Industrial Council for the Garment Industry and the National Union of Clothing Workers.

On 11 April 1973, about 50 uniformed and plainclothes policemen armed with sten guns, pistols and batons rushed to the Mdantsane Hospital in

East London when 800 workers went on strike.

'Trouble' started when workers streamed in and demanded R3 a day before any work would be done. A spokesman for the workers said they earned R1,20 a day and had earned that since operations started on the site more than two years back.

After discussions between police 'officials' and the management the workers were addressed by a company official through an interpreter saying the company was prepared to grant increases depending on productivity. He was however met with a big 'We do not care'.

On 12 April, the workers went back to work after discussions with company officials, they were asked to elect a committee to meet the management. Increase was to be made with effect from 16 April.

The Sugar Mill Strike—Tongaat

On 13 April, a group of about 400 workers at the Tongaat Sugar Complex on the North Coast went on strike and picketed the gates of the factory, preventing other workers from entering.

The strike began at about 6.30 a.m., by which time many of the 'non-striking' workers had arrived. Police were called while the management decided to let the 'non-striking' workers out of the complex to prevent possible incidents. The workers were understood to be demanding an across-the-board increase of R5 a week.

Tongaat Town Board

Scuffles broke out between police and African municipal workers when more than 200 workers of the Tongaat Town Board went on strike on 16 April. The workers were returning home after they had complained about working conditions and wages to the town clerk, Mr J. Dannhauser.

Mr T. Bailey, an employee of the Tongaat Town Board, said a number of Africans who had been involved in the scuffles had been taken to a medical centre for treatment. He said that they had been angered by the police action.

Mr Dannhauser, speaking after the incidents, said that he knew nothing about the police action. He further said he did feel that a number of the grievances were justifiable. They had demanded R1 increase.

On 18 July they returned to work after choosing representatives to discuss their grievances with board 'officials'.

Roberts Construction—Vanderbijlpark

On 25 between 600 and 800 employees at the Iscor works of Roberts Construction walked off the job for 2 hours.

Since they had no spokesman, the reason for the stoppage was 'obscure'.

They were rowdy when addressed by 'officials' of the departments of labour and 'Bantu' Affairs, but calmed down when the District Commandant of Police, Col. L.G. Giliomee, spoke. He promised that if they returned to work personnel officers from the company would discuss their difficulties with them. They then returned to work.

Haggie Rand—Cleveland

Work came to a standstill on 14 May when 1 600 African workers at Haggie Rand, one of South Africa's biggest makers of wire-rope products struck for more pay.

The strike left the giant complex on the Lower Germiston Road, strangely quiet; although a spokesman said production had not been brought to a total stop. The majority of the strikers were migrant labourers recruited from the 'homelands' (rural areas), who make up more than 1 100 of the work force. They had demanded an increase of 3 cents an hour.

Workers claimed some of them still earned R10, R12 and R15 a week without overtime. Which, they said, was compulsory. This was also applicable for workers who had worked for the company for more than fifteen years. 'What we are asking is not for kingdom to rule, but a realistic and reasonable wage. Every month we've got to send money home. Our families are starving and we cannot afford to send our children to school. With the rock-bottom wages we are getting, it is a luxury we cannot afford' (*Rand Daily Mail* 18/4/73).

Harvester Truck—Pietermaritzburg

More than 100 African employees at the new International Harvester truck assembly plant, at Willowton, stopped work on 14 May in demand for higher wages.

The plant manager, Mr Steven Benson, said that he expected the workers to return to work on 15 May. Which never occurred until 21 May.

Kaffrarian Steam Mills—East London

The Black labour force of Kaffrarian Steam Mills failed to turn up for work on 27 May after walking out with demands for higher wages. About 150 African workers gathered outside the flour mills on 28 May but refused to clock in and resume work until their pay demands had been met. The managing director, Mr P. Louw, said the demands were unjustifiable and unrealistic and that the company had replaced many of them with other workseekers and production had not been affected.

The strike followed a walk-out the previous week by all stevedores at East London harbour and the Black staff of the Alloy Diecast Plant at Berlin. In both cases, employers took on other staff.

Textile Workers' Strike—Jacobs

On the 9 August 1973, 'striking' textile workers outside one of Mr Phillip Frame's biggest blanket factories stopped members of the security police from arresting one of their colleagues.

About 1 000 workers were milling outside the factory gates at Jacobs and refusing to enter the premises after a work stoppage, on the evening of 8 August over a wage dispute. Mr S. Luine, one of the company's directors, addressed them and said they should return to work; but they refused. This was in the presence of security police. The 'trouble' began after more than 600 workers employed in 3 departments had been told that their services were terminated. This was after they had demanded that their basic pay be increased from R16,95 to R21 a week.

Results of the Strikes

On 13 August police held two African members of the works committee. Meanwhile, 50 of the 500 were turned away when they re-applied for their jobs. The other 450 were re-engaged. On 24 August 6 more Africans were fired for being members of the union sponsored General Factory Workers Benefit Fund. The other 4 from a group fired a fortnight before the above were charged with incitement under the Industrial Conciliation Act, and a fifth man was charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act.

Sean Metal Ltd.—Alberton

Police were called to Sean Metals, at Union Junction near Alberton on the morning of 3 September when between 600 and 800 African steel workers went on strike for higher pay.

There were no incidents, and after a discussion with the consultative committee the workers agreed to go back to work. The men, most of whom arrived to start the day shift, refused to enter the premises, till they had spoken to the management.

They asked for wage increases but made no specific demands. They also requested increases in service and holiday bonus allowances. The chairman of Sean Metals, Mr W.G. Boustred, said his company was 'very cognisant' of the workers' problems in trying to keep up with the growing inflation in the country and that that had been explained to them.

The Industrial Council for steel workers would meet in about a week's time and there was 'no doubt' that pay would figure prominently.

The Stellenbosch Farmers Winery—New Germany

On 11 October, about 300 African workers at the above firm's depot went on strike when demands for an immediate R5 a week increase in pay were rejected.

A crowd waited at the gates of the depot from 7.15 a.m. when they were due to start work. They had claimed that they would not start work until the management agreed to their demands. The workers also claimed they were paid R12 a week as a basic wage plus a R2 automatic bonus. They were also paid for voluntary overtime. They said they had made previous representations for an increase a month before the strike.

After an hour-long meeting late that morning between the works committee and management, the group outside the gates dwindled. When a police officer told them to 'go home and sleep and come back tomorrow' (*Rand Daily Mail*, 12/10/73) they then left the depot for home.

On 16 October the dispute was settled.

The Busmens' Strike—Durban

On 28 November Durban's municipal 'Black busdrivers' went on strike, putting to a deadstop the only public transport available to thousands of Black commuters. This followed the threatened sacking of one of their colleagues.

The question of the man being sacked arose after a quarrel the previous week between the man involved (driver) and a dispatcher. The incident took place at the Clermont depot.

However, Mr N. Flanagan, general manager of Durban Transport Management Board, confirmed that the driver had not yet been dismissed, but there had been a recommendation that he should be. He further indicated that he had not seen the recommendation himself, but expected to consider an appeal, should there be one, by the domestic committee.

Effects of the Strike

Many of the commuters were late for work, though few absentees were reported. Businessmen, however, expressed concern and it was feared that production at factories would suffer if the strike was prolonged.

Nearly 300 municipal buses were standing idle at the DMTB's various depots—among them Clermont, Klaarwater, Lamontville and Umlazi. Also affected were the Merewent areas, Sydenham, Pinetown and the suburban routes. At Clermont thousands of workers were stranded at bus shelters and some were picked up by their employers in vans and trucks. The strike, however, ended at about 3.00 p.m.

So that right into December the country was experiencing strikes. It needs to be pointed out that most of the strikes were spontaneous. They came out of the workers' dissatisfaction with their conditions. In some cases it was the employers themselves who incited the workers by trying to forestall strikes through the adding of small increases in the workers' paypackets. Which action provoked the workers into strike action.

REACTIONS TO THE STRIKES

The strikes evoked widespread reactions from the different sectors of the South African society; and from overseas groups and individuals.

The common attitude taken in almost all the reactions was that of calling for the need to allow Black trade unionism, through which issues like pay, working conditions and other labour problems could be resolved with the active participation of the Black workers themselves.

The General Secretary of Tucsa (Trade Union Council of S.A.) pointed out the need for the formation of 'parallel shadow African unions' with the assistance of white unions.

However, on the other hand the Minister of Labour, Mr Marais Viljoen, was saying that African trade Unions were totally unacceptable and communication between African workers and management would be achieved through works committees (*Rand Daily Mail*, 6/7/73). Another marked reaction was one of calling for more pay for Black workers. A report calling for greater responsibility from foreign investors in South Africa came from a multi-racial panel that met last year at Cape Town. This panel included a director of Social Research at a university, two Bantustan leaders, a senior Economics lecturer and a Black community leader.

There was, in the report, reference to the 'persistence of poverty and very low wages in South Africa in a period of fast economic development and high profits' with race discrimination as a major factor in that situation (*Star*, 7/7/73).

A policy of 'constructive engagement' by foreign companies was seen as an alternative to withdrawal of foreign investment unless Blacks benefited in the socio-economic development of South African society.

The increase in Black wages had to increase faster than white wages if the income gap were to be narrowed, according to the chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (*Rand Daily Mail*, 6/7/73).

More attention to the living conditions of Black workers was to come from a *Sunday Tribune*, enquiry. The Enquiry Commission revealed that thousands of Natal's Zulu farm labourers were living in abject poverty. The investigation revealed that:

Farmers are protected by powerful legislation that enables them to do with their workers as they will. The workers are bound to the farms by law.

Workers are unprotected, can be evicted at a moment's notice and end up starving in a resettlement area.

A method often used to get rid of a worker and his family is to level

their hut with a tractor—or burn it down.

Child labour is commonplace.

Instead of an employer-employee relationship, a master-servant relationship is widespread, and workers are often beaten by their employers.

Many workers pay their own medical fees and have never had paid leave in their lives.

Many white farmers are against change, don't want to see a minimum wage introduced and abhor the idea of a farm workers' union.

The investigation did not cover the sugar farm workers. These had already been given an increase of 25 per cent.

The practice of the farm labour system in Natal was likened to that of European medieval times; which meant Zulu farm workers were 'no better off than medieval serfs' (*Sunday Tribune*, 15/7/73).

A report from a survey compiled by the University of South Africa and sponsored by some 300 South African firms revealed that 22.5% of all multiple urban African households earned less than was necessary 'to maintain their health—and be fully dressed and clean'. The accepted poverty datum line was rejected and 17 different minimum levels were calculated (*Sunday Express*, 22/7/73).

Another survey conducted by the Industrial Research and Development group of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) revealed that South Africa's textile industry was paying its workers 40% less than the average wage in other manufacturing sectors. This industrial sector was also found to be suffering from a severe scarcity of skilled workers, and had to rely on Europe for manpower, because its training facilities were inadequate (*Cape Times*, 25/7/73).

Another lesson learned from the strikes was that employers always thought differently from the workers on the crisis situation that labour had reached. The director of the Natal Employers' Association, Mr L.D. Thorne, thought:

that employers had to have a single organisation to co-ordinate policy;

that the African worker had to be made to feel he belonged to the work situation;

that wages did not have to fall so far behind again;

that the African had to be given full trade union rights; and

that the floodgate of education and vocational training had to be opened to the African.

Whilst on the other hand, a Black social worker university lecturer, Miss M. Maharaj, blamed the private industrial policies of the different employers for the exclusion of Blacks from certain jobs and for the wage discrepancies. More than 60% of Durban's Indian community lived below the bread line, she said. And it was for the private sector to see to it that such situation was redeemed. Another social worker lecturer, Mr M. Bopape, also felt that many problems pertaining to labour problems could be solved 'at local level by private initiative' (*Star*, 27/7/73).

A study of the servant situation appeared in three articles in the Rand afternoon newspaper, *The Star*. The third article in the series dealt with what was known as 'good treatment' for domestic workers. The writer dealt with domestic workers' problems in pay, uniforms, time, accommodation, heating of quarters, washing, holidays, transport, food, the use of telephones, sick pay, visitors, curfews and notice pay (*Star*, 30/7/73).

More marked reaction came from the Deputy Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, and from an official of the World Council of Churches. The Deputy Minister said that it would take 70 years to erase the gap between 'Bantu' and White wages in South Africa if Black wages increased by 7½% per annum and white wages by 5% respectively (*Cape Times* 9/5/73). The official of the World Council of Churches claimed that higher wages for South Africa's Blacks were no solution to what he regarded as a political problem (*Rand Daily Mail*, 21/6/73).

Some firms decided to raise the levels of their African employees through promotion and special training into white held jobs. The Toyota motor company intended training African mechanics at a school they would open in Johannesburg (*Natal Mercury*, 1/8/73). Barclays Bank believed in advancing some of its African staff members into 'more responsible' positions. An African bank in South Africa was seen as a feasibility; and so was 'an industrial development bank for Africans' (*Cape Times*, 21/7/73).

It was seen as being inevitable that 'as the African moved up the employment ladder, he would keep on bumping the white worker'. This reaction was from the director of the Business School at the Witwatersrand University, Dr S. Biesheuvel (*Cape Argus*, 25/8/73).

Meanwhile the Bloemfontein Municipality was introducing a system of wrist-bands for the identification of its African employees. The bands denoted the employees' status, homeland and locale through the colour code imprinted on the plastic (*Cape Argus*, 25/8/73). Though the Municipality explained the system as being of help to the workers themselves—since most were illiterate, varying opinions held, though, that this move by the municipality was humiliating treatment of the black workers (*Daily News* 24/8/73).

In spite of efforts by the Natal regional office of the Textile Industrial

Workers' Union to reinstate 50 workers sacked from the Frame Group's factory at Jacobs, some of the workers were being endorsed out. A relief fund was launched by the Textile Union at the Tucsa Congress at the beginning of August. By the end of the month more than R1 500 had been paid out to the workers. Workers were being given R8,00 per week until their unemployment insurance (U.I.F.) had been finalised and granted.

At the Progressive Party Congress held in Durban a motion was raised criticising the formation of Black trade unions and the demand for more wages by some Progressive Party members. The mover of the motion claimed that Progressive policy had consistently warned of the dangers of racialism. This warning had to be extended to Blacks as well; so as to avoid a 'dangerous development—that will lead to the polarisation of the races in the industrial field' (*Cape Times*, 5/9/73).

Criticism of Government labour policy also came from the Dutch Reformed Church. The church was against migratory labour according to one of its ministers, the Rev. S.O. Skeen; and the minister called for a system that would be satisfactory 'from a moral, economic and welfare point of view' (*Daily News*, 11/9/73).

The visiting British Trades Union Congress sent a delegation of members who went through the country studying the working conditions of Black workers in British firms. This delegation also met the Prime Minister Mr B.J. Vorster (*Star*, 10/10/73). Amongst the observations made by the British TUC was the appalling wages and conditions among African stevedores at the Cape Town docks (*Star*, 16/10/73), the 'negative attitude to gain political rights' by the members of the Government-nominated South African Indian Council (*Daily News*, 18/10/73) and the need for Black trade unions. The TUC delegation demanded:

Freedom of association and collective bargaining through trade unions for all workers.

A living wage and fair conditions of employment through the rate for the job.

The repeal of all legislation which discriminates against African and other Black workers.

Social insurance for Africans particularly in the urban areas and the trade training schemes on a massive scale (*Sunday Tribune*, 21/10/73).

In the Western Cape industrialists decided on the establishment of an industrial training centre for African workers in conjunction with the Department of Bantu Administration and Development (*Argus*, 27/10/73).

Efforts by Blacks to openly organise their own Black trade unions were hampered by Government interference and security police intimidation. The mass state bannings against members of trade unions, SASO, BPC, BCP, the Indian Congress and other organisations opposed to Government-created platforms made it hard for Blacks to converge their efforts in the development towards Black trade unionism.