



# **LIBERATION**

ONE SHILLING

26 JULY, 1957

Articles on :

**THE H-BOMB**

**LESSONS OF JUNE 26**

**POLL TAX**



**A JOURNAL OF DEMOCRATIC DISCUSSION**

# LIBERATION

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# Liberation

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EDITORIAL

## A CALL FOR COURAGE

**"It must not happen that we do not pull ourselves together before it is too late. We must muster the insight, the seriousness and the courage to leave this folly and face reality."**

**— Dr. Albert Schweitzer.**

Some things are too small to be seen. Some things are too big.

Let us suppose that you knew someone was poisoning your food. You would do something about that person. You would notify the police. You would take steps to stop him. You would do everything you could to protect yourself and your family from being killed.

But in fact your food is being poisoned. You are being threatened with death. And you are doing nothing about it.

There are at present three countries which have the resources and the means to produce atomic and hydrogen bombs: the United States, the Soviet Union and Great Britain. They are not only making these bombs, but they are exploding them to test their effects. On a number of occasions in the first half of 1957 each of these countries has held test explosions of hydrogen bombs.

Every time such a bomb explodes it releases poisonous radiation into the earth's atmosphere. The radiation is carried all over the world by wind-currents. It does not go away, but remains for many years. It is absorbed by the bodies of human beings and by the plants and animals which we eat. If we build up enough radiation, over a period of time, it

will kill us. It will rot our bones. It can, even without our knowing it, affect our reproductive organs, so that our unborn children and grandchildren will be still-born, or born physically or mentally defective.

You cannot see atoms, or the radiations they cause. They are too small. And most of us cannot see the terrible threat of the hydrogen bomb. It is too big.

But we must open up our eyes and our minds to this problem and do something about it quickly — if we want to live.

## HERE IS THE EVIDENCE

We do not make these statements without due reason or evidence. Many of the world's most famous scientists and leaders have issued grave warnings already. From his lonely medical mission in Central Africa, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, famed 82-year old Nobel Prize Winner, scientist and musician of genius, called upon the Norwegian Nobel Committee to broadcast his message to the world:

"Radio-activity is a catastrophe for the human race . . . Our descendants are threatened by the greatest and most terrible danger . . ."

A Committee of the British Atomic Scientists' Association which included Professor J. Rotblat, Professor Alexander Haddow and Professor L. S. Penrose, eminent nuclear physicists, has declared:

"At least 50,000 may suffer from bone cancer as a direct result of the hydrogen bombs already exploded."

On April 18 leading West German nuclear physicists (including Professor Otto Hahn, discoverer of the nuclear fission of uranium) declared they would not participate in the production, testing or use of atomic weapons:

"No limit is known to the life-destroying effect of strategic atomic weapons," declared their statement. "By spreading radio-activity through hydrogen bombs, one could exterminate the population of the German Federal Republic."

Professor Bakulev, President of the Soviet Academy of Medical Sciences, declared:

"Soviet doctors and scientists must press for the prohibition of atomic and hydrogen weapons."

Dr. P. Kusch, American Nobel Prize winner, said:

"As scientists we have been concerned with the possibility that cumulative effects of large numbers of nuclear explosions will pose a threat to the health and even the life of the entire human race."

Professor Joliot Curie, former French High Commissioner For Atomic Energy, Nobel Prize winner:

"If these experiments are not stopped the amount of strontium (a substance released in nuclear explosions) affecting men and women, and in particular young children who are growing, will

certainly reach a level sufficient to cause numerous bone cancers and leukemias." (Leukemia is an incurable blood-cancer.)

And here finally, is a statement by Dr. Linus Pauling, (U.S.A.) Nobel Prize winner, who headed two thousand American scientists in protesting against a continuance of the bomb tests:

"Each nuclear bomb test spreads an added burden of radio-active elements over every part of the world.

"Each added amount of radiation causes damage to the health of human beings all over the world and causes damage to the pool of human germ plasm such as will lead to the increase in the number of seriously defective children that will be born in future generations.

"The bomb tests are causing now 1,000 additional deaths by leukemia each year, and even more by bone cancer.

"I am convinced that there will be born in future generations hundreds of thousands of feeble-minded children with serious physical defects because of the tests that have already been made."

#### WHO IS GUILTY?

And these are only a few of the innumerable statements that have been made during this year, 1957, by scientific men of unquestionable ability, knowledge and integrity all over the world. They have warned us with a stark clarity that leaves no room for misunderstanding that the hydrogen bomb tests are causing cancer, poisoning our food supplies, threatening unborn generations.

Why do we not know about these warnings? Surely if these facts were sufficiently well-known and understood, there would be universal discussion of them. Why this conspiracy of silence?

A heavy responsibility rests on our daily newspaper press, and the agencies which feed it and us with information. They have deliberately sat upon and hushed up the biggest news story of 1957.

Most people rely on the newspapers for information. If ever the newspapers have failed in their duty to keep the public informed on a matter of vital public importance, it is on this very question of the nuclear weapons. Not only have they failed to inform the people of these vital warnings from eminent scientists, cited above. They have also suppressed the appeals of eminent world statesmen. We are not referring here only to the numerous statements by spokesmen of the Soviet Union, China, Poland, Czechoslovakia and other Communist leaders, who are always accused of making propaganda, whatever they say. But why were we not told of the repeated appeals of the Government of Japan — whose people were the first victims of nuclear weapons — for the ending of the bomb tests? And the similar appeals by the Governments of India, Ceylon, Indonesia and Burma?

Not only in the East, but also in the West leading public figures have appealed for an immediate ending of the tests. Among them we may list Mr. Tage Erlander, Prime Minister of Sweden, who proposed at least "the temporary ending of all nuclear tests," the Swiss Foreign Minister, Mr. Max Petitpierre, and the British Labour Party which at its last annual conference unanimously resolved to oppose the continuation of H-bomb tests and demanded the abolition of all atomic weapons.

Finally, we may cite Mr. Adlai Stevenson, head of the Democratic Party in the United States, and its candidate for the Presidency in the last elections. On October 10, 1956, he called upon President Eisenhower to give a lead in the banning of hydrogen bomb tests. And he added the telling accusation that the U.S. Government

"has even withdrawn its own proposals when others indicated their willingness to accept these proposals."

By shutting all these vital facts out of prominence, and in many cases out of any mention in their columns, our newspapers are contributing in no small measure to the danger. Mankind's main hope of survival in the face of this dreadful peril lies in the people becoming aroused and taking steps to protect themselves. They cannot do this while they are deliberately kept in ignorance of the issues.

#### WHAT'S BEHIND IT?

Why have the people not been given the facts?

The answer must be sought not in the blindness of our newspaper editors and proprietors, but in the political and military policy of the ruling circles in Britain and America to whom our press, radio and other instruments of public information are subordinate.

For the fact must be faced that of the three nuclear powers it is the Americans, followed by the British, who have consistently justified and refused to renounce nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union, ever since the ending of the Second World War, has repeatedly proposed and demanded that these weapons be outlawed by international agreement, just as poison-gas was outlawed after the First World War, as a weapon of mass destruction directed against innocent non-combatants, women and children.

Just as consistently, the United States has refused to enter into any such agreement, or even to make a formal statement condemning the use of nuclear weapons in warfare. The reason is that the fundamental policy of the U.S.A. Government is — and has been ever since the defeat of Hitler — based on two suppositions (both of them, incidentally, false) which underly all its actions in the sphere of foreign affairs. The first is that a Third World War is inevitable, with the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. as the two main antagonists. The second is that of America's alleged superiority in nuclear weapons, which are assumed to be the decisive factor in such a war.

When the Americans dropped the atom bombs that wiped out Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, they were no longer thinking about the war with Japan — Japan was already virtually defeated and suing for peace.

The bombs were the first shots in the cold war against the Soviet Union. The man in charge of the construction of the bombs was U.S. General Groves. He stated publicly in 1954:

"There was never any illusion on my part but that Russia was the enemy, and the project was conducted on this basis."

In June, 1954, General Gruenther, head of N.A.T.O. (then known as Supreme Commander of Allied Powers in Europe) told a press conference that he was engaged in working out "a philosophy of war" which was "projected some three years in the future." He said:

"In our thinking we visualise the use of atomic bombs in support of ground troops. We also visualise the use of atomic bombs on targets in enemy territories."

At the beginning of this year, Mr. Charles Wilson, Secretary of Defence, told the United States Congress:

"Our basic defence policy is based on the use of atomic weapons in a major war, and is based on the use of such atomic weapons as would be militarily feasible in a smaller war."

And, on May 12, 1957, General Norstad, Supreme Commander in the West, said in New York, that the Western Powers would "use atomic weapons first", even if the other side did not do so.

### **IT MUST BE STOPPED!**

It is this thinking and this strategy which lies behind the persistent and stubborn refusal of the United States and its supporters to renounce atomic weapons, and their failure in the face of the ever-mounting volume of protests and warnings, to enter any agreement to halt, even temporarily the testing of hydrogen bombs. And it is because they are slavishly bound to U.S. and British cold war policies that our South African newspaper editors, Nationalist and U.P. alike, have suppressed news of the great debate of 1957 over the continuance of these tests.

But the issue involved — the question of life or death for millions of people — is too great for us to allow it to be buried in silence any longer.

One of the factors which keeps many people from speaking out is that the Soviet Union is a strong advocate of outlawing and destroying all nuclear weapons, and of calling an immediate halt to the testing of such weapons. The Soviet Government declared its readiness to stop the tests, if the U.S. and U.K. Governments would make similar undertakings, in May 1955. It repeated this offer in November 1955, in July 1956, in November 1956 and in January 1957. In March of this year, the Soviet Union suggested an agreement to suspend all tests for a fixed period. Its statement declared that the Soviet Government stood for the complete cessation of all such tests, but in view of the Western Powers rejection of previous proposals for complete cessation it was prepared to agree to a temporary cessation. (President Eisenhower and Mr. MacMillan replied in a joint statement declaring that "the security of the free world must continue to depend in a marked degree on the nuclear deterrent. To maintain this effectively, continued nuclear testing is required.")

Now some people take up the standpoint that Communism is so wicked that anything the representatives of the Soviet Union say must necessarily be wrong, and if Mr. Krushchov and Mr. Bulganin were to make a statement condemning cannibalism, such people would no doubt immediately begin to consider whether there is not, after all, much to be said in favour of eating people. Apart from such lunatics, there are ever so many perfectly sane and rational people who are afraid that if they give any indication of agreeing with anything that is said by Soviet leaders on any question whatsoever they will be listed by Mr. Swart and his security police as Communists, and banned, refused passports and otherwise made to suffer.

Such, unfortunately, is the mental climate in our country that we cannot deny the reality of such fears.

### **WE MUST SPEAK OUT!**

Yet, with all the sincerity and earnestness at our command, we do appeal to everyone who reads this article to put aside every such consideration from his mind. For when we think of what is at stake, the very survival of ourselves, our children, our country and all mankind, we cannot, we dare not, evade our responsibilities and take refuge in silence.

Let no-one deceive himself that we are safe in our corner of the world. The winds that blow about the globe, laden with poisonous radiation, blow also over Africa. Already, who knows how many in our country have suffered harmful or fatal effects from the hydrogen bomb tests?

Above all, all the double talk about "the great deterrent" cannot conceal the fundamental logic of the continuation of nuclear tests and nuclear armament. Every year the great powers are adding to their stockpiles of these terrible weapons, and every year the weapons become more terrible. The bomb that killed over 50,000 in a second at Hiroshima in 1945 is already obsolete and out of date. If the nations carry on with this lunacy of testing and perfecting these diabolical engines there can be only one end to it all — the ultimate horror of nuclear warfare.

The Lord President, Earl Home, comfortingly told the British House of Lords on May 9, that "in the event of nuclear war there would be some areas where some people would survive."

We in South Africa would not do well to deceive ourselves that many would survive in our country. This country would almost inevitably become a major target in nuclear war, and not only our great seaports in the South and the East, but even more so our densely populated mining areas in the North. For our great gold mines in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State have become producers of something more harmful than gold — uranium, raw material of every nuclear weapon.

The recent annual report of the Transvaal and Orange Free State Chamber of Mines revealed for the first time the fantastic extent to which uranium production has developed in the past few years. In 1956 uranium oxide reached a total of 8,726,308 lbs., and produced a profit of £24,662,000 more than half last year's profit on gold, which was itself a record.



Not even Mr. Erasmus would seriously contest the fact that the Union is practically defenceless against atomic attack.

We must do something about it, and urgently too.

Mr. Cecil Williams and the fifty-odd prominent theatre and radio personalities who wrote to Mr. Strijdom asking him to use his influence "to bring about an immediate cessation of these tests" in defence of "not only our lives but the culture we hold dear" — these have shown us the way.

We must speak out! Our scientists and our educationists must follow the path charted by Dr. Schweitzer and so many others, and follow the example of the artists headed by Mr. Williams. And our women's and cultural organisations, our political and trade union leaders, our writers, our lawyers, our workers and farmers.

"Insight, seriousness, courage." Those are the qualities which Dr. Schweitzer correctly called for at this grave time. Let it not be said that our people were wanting in those qualities when every human achievement and aspiration was in peril.

# AFRICAN WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS

by BEN TUROK, M.P.C.,

Assistant Secretary, Metal Workers Union (Non-European)

The new Industrial Conciliation Act, which came into operation at the beginning of 1957, despite the opposition of trade unions and employers alike, has led to a great deal of discussion of basic policy in the trade union movement. There has been a process of soul-searching, reassessment of past policies and attempts to find a way out for the future, and this process is still continuing. This discussion will not be fruitful unless it takes into account the importance of the largest group of workers, the Africans, in relation to the trade union movement as a whole.

This discussion should also take into account the powerful tendency to organisation and trade union action arising out of the sharp decline of real wages over the past decade, with the very real poverty and distress that this has caused, particularly among the lowest-paid section.\*

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\* Miss Olive Gibson, in her recent detailed study "The Cost of Living for Africans", points out that there has been a "grave deterioration in conditions for Africans." In his recent book on the African workers, Mr. Alex Hepple, M.P. confirms this opinion. He says, "Taking wages and cost-of-living allowance together, and taking account of the small rise in wages granted to them in 1942, unskilled workers are receiving less real wages than they did before the war."

These are factors behind the recent bus boycotts, which have led to acknowledgements by Chambers of Commerce and other bodies that African wages are too low, and are reflected in the mass campaign launched by the Congress of Trade Unions, in conjunction with the African National Congress and other progressive organisations, for immediately wage-increases all round, a national minimum wage of £1 a day, and the recruitment of 20,000 unorganised workers into trade unions.

African workers in the towns, as can be seen from the defiance campaign, the Congress of the People, the bus boycotts, the day of protest on June 26th and many other struggles, have emerged as a force to be reckoned with, showing a high degree of unity and political consciousness.

Yet this advance has not been reflected in a corresponding growth, so far, of African trade unions. Compared with the total number of Africans engaged in industry\* the number who are members of trade unions, about 30,000 is discouragingly small.

Why has trade unionism not taken deep root among the African workers? Why are the African unions weak? There are objective reasons for this, beyond the immediate control of the trade union movement.

Migratory labour is one of the major drawbacks to trade union organisation. Workers who are continually moving to and fro between the towns and the reserves are difficult to organise. In many factories there is a complete turnover of trade union members every few years, and migrant workers often do not return to the same factory or even the same town after a spell of farming. Many workers who do live permanently in the towns nevertheless have links with the countryside and support families in the reserves.

Nevertheless, there is a steady growth of a stable labour force in the town industries. Professor J. L. Sadie has estimated that 65 per cent. of the 2½ million urban Africans are settled permanently in the towns.

Another factor holding back trade unionism among Africans is that they are restricted mostly to unskilled work. Skilled workers everywhere find it easier to organise successfully. They are in a better bargaining position in relation to the employers, who find it difficult to replace them. That is why trade unionism began, in England and other countries, with the craftsmen. Yet semi-skilled and unskilled workers have flooded into the trade union movement everywhere. The so-called "unskilled worker" is not really so lacking in skill or so easy to replace as employers try to make out; for the "labourer" in any industry is required to and does acquire a high degree of facility at his work and no employer would care to face the grim prospect of replacing his entire African staff overnight.

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\* The number given by the Industrial Legislation Commission for 1948 is 232,502 excluding mine-workers. (Southern Transvaal: 164,802; Western Cape: 22,768; Port Elizabeth: 10,670; Durban and Pinetown: 34,262). A more recent figure (1950) is given by Miss Muriel Howell, "South Africa's Non-White Workers," as being 368,802 African workers in industry excluding mines.

Trade unionism is not spontaneous. It is true that disputes often arise at work places, in the course of which the workers take united action, but such actions do not of themselves automatically lead to the establishment of permanent stable organisations of the trade union type, which require conscious effort.

Such conscious efforts to organise African workers have been made from time to time, though far too little on the part of the organised non-African trade unions. Their comparative lack of success, and the consequent lack of a trade union tradition and consciousness among African workers today, is due not merely to the type of difficulty mentioned above, or to the fact — referred to by Mr. Alex Hepple in his "The African Worker in South Africa," — that Africans are "relative newcomers to commerce and industry." In fact, already in 1925 Africans made up 46 per cent. of the labour force in manufacture, and today South Africa stands twelfth in the world in the degree of industrialisation in proportion to the population.

In fact the principal difficulties in the way of development of a big trade union movement and tradition among Africans are those deliberately imposed for many years by the industrial legislation of the country.

Trade unions always strive to attain legal recognition and status, for the history of the movement has shown that they flourish under such conditions. Lack of recognition hampers their growth.

Trade union recognition came to South Africa, after bitter struggles, in 1924, with the passing of the first Industrial Conciliation Act. Unions could be registered under this Act, thus securing their legal status. But from the inception Africans were excluded from its benefits, and were thus left out of the general development of the registered trade union movement. As a result they were unable to take part in collective bargaining. The conclusion of an industrial agreement laying down rates of pay and conditions of work has had little meaning for a section of the workers who were never, either directly or through their representatives, consulted or even told what was going on until the agreement was reached. How important this has been in preventing the development of union-consciousness among Africans may be seen, for example, by comparing the position of Coloured workers in the Cape, whose trade union tradition is a valuable part of the heritage of their people.

African trade unions are not illegal. Even strikes are legal under certain circumstances. But, as pointed out by Mr. Hepple in the book cited above, "Although the neglect of White trade unionists has been responsible in some measure for the slow progress of unionism among Africans, Government restriction and employers' hostility have been the main handicaps."

Union Governments, whether S.A.P., Coalition, or United Party were never sympathetic to African unions, and the present Nationalist Government is openly hostile. The Minister of Labour (then Mr. Schoeman) himself stated, in introducing the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act, that its purpose was to "bleed these unions to death." Without actu-

ally declaring African Unions illegal, the impression of illegality has been fostered by the Labour Department and the Native Affairs Department in every possible way, both among employers and workers. Many Africans are not aware that they have the right to form unions, even if these are unregistered and unrecognised. Strikes frequently take place of African workers — there were 33 in 1954 and 72 in 1955 — but these are seldom consolidated in the form of established workers' organisations.

There is a great deal of scope for open and legal trade unionism among African workers, even within the framework of the present unjust laws; but the workers themselves are not sufficiently acquainted with these possibilities.

Anti-African prejudice has combined with the operation of the Industrial Conciliation Act to keep Africans out of trade unions formed by workers of other racial groups. At one time, to their credit, despite the provisions of the Act, many registered Unions went out to recruit African members. But in 1945 the Labour Department threatened that any Union which included African workers would lose its registration. As a result Africans in the furniture, sweet and other industries were excluded and have remained unorganised ever since. In other industries, such as food and canning, textile and laundry, parallel African unions were established which worked in harmony with the registered organisations.

Looking back, one may well ask whether the unions should not have refused in 1945 to expel the African members and taken a stand for unity rather than let the Government divide the workers on racial lines. Although one may leave that question to be debated by trade unionists with more knowledge of conditions in those days, there can be no doubt that the spinelessness of the registered unions on the racial question for many years cost the movement dear when it led to the unions' pitiful inability to prevent the enactment of the shocking new I.C. Act by the present Government.

It is true that the former Trades and Labour Council repeatedly pronounced in favour of the amendment of the definition of "employee" in the old Act to include Africans. Resolution after resolution to this effect was taken by annual T. & L.C. Conferences, but never followed by effective action or campaigning, even during the war period when Madeley was in office as Minister of Labour, and the workers were in an exceptionally strong position generally to press important claims.

As a result of the exclusion of Africans from the registered unions, and hence from the negotiation of agreements, most registered unions pay little attention to their needs and demands. There is an ever-growing gap between the wages of "skilled" and "unskilled." Africans cannot be expected to take any interest in such negotiations.

Under the I.C. Act, a closely-knit relationship has developed between the registered unions, the employers and the Labour Department. So much so that many Africans think that the trade unions are part of the state machinery, from which they, as oppressed people, are excluded. They

speaking of "Government unions." When I have asked African workers who are about to join our Union who they think is responsible for paying the office rent, I have frequently had the reply — "the Government!"

Even in the industries I have referred to where parallel unions of African workers work in close co-operation with registered unions, the situation leaves much to be desired. True, a measure of unity has undoubtedly been achieved; joint strikes and other struggles have taken place, and these unions stand in the forefront of the present trade union movement. But there is some doubt in my mind whether this type of unity is really the answer to our problems. The administrative separation enforced by the Labour Department, the division of funds — so important a question in the unions — and especially the exclusion of the African unions from Industrial Councils and other media of negotiation with the employers: all these factors serve to reinforce colour barriers and undermine true trade union unity.

Especially when new unions are being built up, in the crucial early months of organisation, the slender resources of leadership are critically strained by the need to provide separate committees for parallel unions. It is at this time, too, that it is important to weld the emerging leadership closely together on sound trade union principles. This cannot be achieved by parallelism.

The I.C. Act, and its acceptance by the trade union movement, has not only hamstrung the development of the African workers as trade unionists; it has had a fatally weakening effect on the trade union movement as a whole. Not only has it had the crippling result of excluding what is numerically the largest group of potential trade union members, it has also deprived the leadership of the movement of the participation of what has shown itself to be the most politically developed and conscious section of the working class. Is it any wonder the trade union movement is so backward?

Looking back on the past, many trade unionists must be asking themselves whether the acceptance of registration under the old I.C. Act was not a mistake. Was it not this acceptance, with its consequent exclusion of tens of thousands of potential union members, which has led to the weakness, ineffectiveness and lack of principle of the movement of today in the face of the Nationalist attacks on the workers' rights?

No doubt, in 1924 many trade unionists were conscious of these great disadvantages of registration, but weighed them against the immediate benefits of legal protection for their members.

Today under the new I.C. Act, with its many additional and grave restrictions on trade union freedom, the problem presents itself anew. The protection afforded by the new Act is so little; the price of registration is so great, including not only severance of the African workers, but also dismemberment of unions into separate European and Coloured or Indian fragments, that more and more union members are beginning to ask: "Is it worth it?"

Moreover, it is becoming increasingly recognised that the African workers themselves are a force to be reckoned with. Despite their present

lack of trade union organisation, they have in the course of the bus boycotts and other struggles shown a sense of solidarity and discipline that many long-established trade unions could not hope to emulate.

In the circumstances, it seems to me that the time has come that the South African trade union movement should turn its back on the barren and disastrous experiment of apartheid which it has practiced during its past 60 years of battling in the wilderness. It should return to the well tried and proven path of industrial organisation of all workers, irrespective of colour, which is the only standard of trade unionism known or acceptable to the great world beyond the borders of Southern Africa.

Genuine, multi-racial industrial unions, affording equal democratic rights to all members, will of course not qualify for registration in terms of the Schoeman-de Klerk Industrial Conciliation Act. So much the worse for the Act, we should say. The Act should be made for the Unions, not the Unions made to fit the Act! And if the unions at present registered should decide to boycott the Act, it would become a useless dead letter — just as the Schoeman Native Labour Act has been killed stone dead by the virtual boycott of it on the part of the African workers.

The most convincing argument to persuade the registered unions of the truth of these arguments and to get them to throw away the useless crutch of registration would be the effective organisation of tens of thousands of African workers into trade unions now.

Looked at from this approach, the mass organising drive of the S.A. Congress of Trade Unions, behind the slogans of all round wage increases and a national minimum of £1 a day, can prove crucial for the whole future of trade unionism.

## **I DON'T AGREE !**

People do discuss the articles in LIBERATION, because we hear all sorts of views expressed. Sometimes they agree with the writer, sometimes they feel something is not right, or not correctly expressed.

When you've discussed these articles, why not put your thoughts on paper? We want to hear from our readers. We want to know when they don't agree with us. We want their point of view.

You may not feel that you can write an article for LIBERATION. But you can put your thoughts down on paper in the form of a letter.

And encourage your friends to do the same. Do it now — while you are still thinking about these articles! Send your letters to:

**LIBERATION, Box 10120, Johannesburg.**

# NO TAXATION

## WITHOUT REPRESENTATION

by WALTER SISULU

At the beginning of the 1957 Parliamentary session the Government announced that it proposed to increase the amount of Poll Tax payable by Africans. Today it is £1, for men only. The Government's proposals would make the minimum £1.10, ranging to £4 and over, depending on income, and women would have to pay as well as men. This proposal aroused a storm of protest. It came just at a time when the Rand bus boycotts had provided the most striking demonstration possible of African poverty; so much so that even employers had to recognise that most of our people are living below the breadline. Even a Government so utterly heedless of human suffering and of public opinion as the Nationalists had to beat a minor retreat. They took steps to restore the old bus fares, and have, for the time being withdrawn their increased poll tax proposals. We should not deceive ourselves that these proposals will not be brought forward again, but we are forewarned now and should be prepared to meet them. Moreover, the whole question of taxation of the African and other Non-European people in South Africa raises the fundamental issues of taxation without representation which history has time and again proved to be an explosive one.

It has been said that it is difficult to "draw the line between taxation and plunder," and nowhere is this more true than when the taxes are levied and the revenue expended by those who have neither a mandate from nor any responsibility to the taxpayers. It is a situation which always leads to trouble, as is shown by a long record of disturbances, ranging from the Wat Tyler rebellion in Britain in 1380 to the Bambata Rebellion in Natal in 1906. Nor should we forget the American war of independence in 1776, which began with the "Boston Tea Party" and the raising of the dynamic slogan "No Taxation Without Representation!"

The poll tax in South Africa is not, and has never been, primarily a revenue-raising measure, but part of the forced-labour machinery of the country. It offends against all of the principles of sound taxation policy. As defined by Adam Smith, in "The Wealth of Nations," these principles are:

- (1) Each taxpayer should pay in proportion to his ability;
- (2) The manner and amount should be made public and a time fixed for payment;
- (3) The time and place of payment should be chosen with a view to the convenience of the taxpayer;

(4) The expense of collection should be as low as possible.

African poll taxes are inequitable, arbitrary, inconvenient and extravagantly expensive to collect. They offend against all Smith's principles, and all other principles of modern taxation policy, including the principle that the poor must not be made to pay for their own social services. This is because, as stated above, these taxes are not and never were purely revenue-raising in their origin and purpose. The original poll taxes were imposed in this country in the last century, specifically to force Africans off the land to come and work on European-owned farms, in the newly-established mines and other industries. As Sir George Albu put it in 1897, if you want to compel the African to work "then you must tax him."

Poll tax still serves that purpose; but it is Dr. Verwoerd's idea that it must now be increased so as to meet the steadily increasing expenses of the Native Affairs Department. It is also proposed to use the Bantu Authorities Act to transfer part of the job of raising inequitable and excessive taxes to the Chiefs, now to be known as "Bantu Authorities," under the pretext that Africans must pay for their own welfare. In fact, of course, South Africa is an integrated society and it is absurd to expect any one section, least of all the poorest one, to pay for social services which should be met out of general revenue. It is frequently stated by Nationalist politicians and propagandists that the Europeans "carry" the rest of the population, and that the African people do not pay for their own services. The African National Congress statement rejecting the proposed poll tax increases, provides figures which refute this claim.

It is officially admitted that we contribute in taxation every year towards the country's revenue between £32,500,000 and £42,500,000 — £2½ million in poll taxes and the balance in indirect taxes. It is also recognised and acknowledged by all impartial observers that we receive in social services only a small portion of what we pay to the country.

In fact, if one takes into account that the whole economy of the country is sustained by African labour, and that most of the "services" provided for us are such totally unwanted and undesirable burdens as the army of Native Affairs Department officials and the police, it will clearly be seen that financially, as in every other way, Africans get a raw deal in the Union.

Non-Europeans have always resisted taxation increases fiercely in South Africa. One may recall the 1903 struggle led by the "Transvaal Native Association" (a forerunner of Congress) against the £3 tax; the Bambata rebellion of 1906; the sustained struggle of the Indian people, supported at that time by the Chinese, and inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi, against increased taxes from 1906 to 1914; and the resistance of the "Israelites" (Intabelanga) in 1921.

If and when the Nationalists resume their attempts to enforce their proposals, they will meet with united resistance. The more so as the people are moving rapidly towards a challenge to the whole unjust system of poll tax, linked as it is with passes and Bantu Authorities. Poll tax is part of the pass system, designed to force Africans to work for Europeans. The Reference Book, which has taken the place of different



passes, includes pages for different taxes, Bantu Authorities and general tax included. This is in terms of pass laws — Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act of 1952. Police raids have always been conducted for both taxes and passes. "Tax, pass, Kaffir".

Recently both tax and passes have been used to break the peoples' struggle. In the areas where pass laws are not in operation the police do not hesitate to harass the people by demanding production of tax receipts, so that taxes in the case of Africans are not only an economic burden but a form of persecution. The struggle against taxes is closely linked with the struggle against the passes. This could not be otherwise, since the authorities use the non-production of tax receipts demanded by any police officer in the same light as a failure to produce a pass. The extension of both passes and poll tax to women are only two sides of the one coin.

The people in the Reserves are going to be faced with numerous taxes, in addition to the general tax. There is insufficient land; even the little they have is unproductive, nor do they have sufficient stock. Transport between their places of employment and their homes is so high, the little wages they get is spent on clothing and transport. Where are they going to get the money from for general tax? Let alone the additional taxes under Bantu Authorities. So that in the reserves the struggle will be largely resistance to the Bantu Authorities; whilst in urban areas it will be part of the anti-pass campaign and linked with the struggle for better wages.

Thus for the people in both town and country the struggle against "taxation without representation" is a vital one, closely linked with their everyday demands for increased wages, for more land; against pass laws and Bantu Authorities. It is a struggle which must inevitably bring fuller understanding of and determination to fight for the broad democratic perspectives of the Freedom Charter.

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# STARK REALITIES

## The Significance of June 26th

by ALAN DOYLE

"Industry views with concern the warning that its Native labour force proposes to absent itself illegally from work on June 26 (for) . . . increased remuneration at the fantastic rate of £1 a day, even for unskilled labour.

"This demand is regarded as reckless and irresponsible in the face of the stark realities of our industrial economy."

— Mr. L. Lulofs, President of the Transvaal Chamber of Industry. (Report in The Star, June 24, 1957.)

June 26 in Johannesburg this year was in some ways the most remarkable of the many historic events which have taken place on this famous anniversary. There was an almost complete general strike of African industrial workers: estimates range from 80 to 90 per cent. effective. Most of these workers are not yet organised in trade unions, and in fact no one, officially called them out on strike. True, Congress had called a "day of protest", and some unknown daring spirits had put up a sticker calling for a stayaway. But there can be little doubt that the real impetus behind the demonstration came from the masses of the workers themselves. They coined the slogan "Awuphatwa!" — It (the work) shall not be touched. Spontaneously they held hundreds of unofficial meetings in factories and workplaces. They made the demand for more wages and a £1-a-day minimum their own. And they decided not to go to work that Wednesday.

The employers and the police panicked. Dire warnings and threats were issued. Those who failed to turn up to work would be sacked. Their passes would be endorsed and they would be expelled from town. In response to Mr. Lulofs' circular, bosses called meetings and relayed these threats to the workers. All day long on the Tuesday radio diffusion broadcast police warnings and Native Affairs Department appeals. The answer of the workers was to stay away in tens of thousands. They understood perfectly well how empty the threats were, and that the employers would never seriously consider sacking them all and finding and training entirely new staff to replace them.

### WHAT WAS BEHIND IT?

The Johannesburg June 26 demonstration cannot be dismissed as the

work of agitators. Those who participated in it faced not merely threats of dismissal but also the very real loss of a day's pay. There was no "intimidation" or picketing, and the police who turned out in townships and railway stations and bus stops to "protect" those going to work found they were wasting their time. There was no-one there for them to "protect". Instead of trying to pretend it was a failure (like the Rand Daily Mail and Die Vaderland) or writing it off as the work of agitators (like Mr. Lulofs and his Chamber of Industries) it would be a good deal more sensible and responsible to make an effort to understand what was really behind the strike. What was it that caused all these workers to act like one man on June 26?

Congress advanced many slogans for its day of protest. Against passes and permits. Stand by our leaders. No more apartheid and group areas. All these slogans did really meet with a response from the hearts of the Non-European people. But all objective observers are agreed that the slogan that captured the imagination and feelings of the workers particularly at this time was that for more wages — £1 a day.

It is not difficult to understand why. The workers, particularly the African workers, are accustomed to poverty and hardship, though they have never accepted it. They have had, for very many years, to make do with too little pay, too little food, too little warmth and comfort for their families. But the rising prices over, especially, the last ten years of Nationalist rule, without any equivalent increase in the contents of the wage-envelope, have cut down the buying power of even the little wages that our South African employers see fit, and are not ashamed, to pay their workers.

### THE £ BUYS LESS AND LESS

These facts are brought out with merciless clarity, and illustrated with detailed figures, in the Memorandum "The Urgent Need for a General Increase in Wages", which has been sent to major employers' associations throughout the country by the Congress of Trade Unions.

The "Retail Price Index Numbers" issued monthly by the Government shows that prices of food have gone up by 56 per cent. over the past nine years, and the prices of "all items" have gone up by 44 per cent.

But SACTU shows that these figures do not adequately represent the real increase in the cost-of-living, especially for lower-paid Non-European workers. The figures are based on the expenditure of middle-class European families. Non-Europeans spend a far higher percentage of their earnings on food. And the food they buy has gone up far more than the foods bought by middle class people. For example mealie meal has increased in price by 177 per cent, potatoes by 284 per cent, rice by 346 per cent.

The Memorandum estimates that the real increase in the cost-of-living since 1948, for low-pay workers, is between 65 and 70 per cent.

That means that the £ today is worth only about 11s.9d. compared with its value in 1948.

## BUT WAGES LAG BEHIND

Compare this increase in living costs with the sluggish movement of wages for so-called "unskilled" labour. As an example, rates in four industries are quoted for the Witwatersrand area, in 1948 and then in 1957 (the figures include cost-of-living allowances). Here they are:—

INDUSTRY	1948	1957
Chemical .....	£2. 3.0	£2.11.9
Distributive .....	2. 8.0	3. 0.9
Engineering .....	1.18.0	2.11.3
Motor .....	2. 7.0	2.16.7

The average for the four groups of workers in 1948 was £2.4s. In 1957 it is £2.15s. The increase in the money wage is 25 per cent. The increase in prices is at least 65 per cent.

The lesson is plain. The workers were badly off in 1948. Today they are much worse off. Their real wages, measured in terms of what the money will buy, have gone down a lot.

## THE WORKERS ARE STARVING

How do they manage? They can't save on rent. They can't save on clothes — already many are dressed in rags and cast-offs. There is only one item they can save on — food. And since they were already not getting enough to eat, there can be only one result. The polite term is malnutrition. Let us call it by its proper name: starvation.

Mr. Lulofs, your workers are starving. Their children are crying from hunger. They get sick and die because they have not enough to eat. That is one of the "stark realities of our industrial economy" about which you talk so glibly, when you threaten workers with dismissal and deportation.

It is not just the Congress of Trade Unions who say so. Here is the conclusion of Miss Olive Gibson, who compiled a painstaking survey of the cost-of-living for Africans for the Institute of Race Relations:—

"The cost of the minimum food requirements has risen by 29 per cent, since 1950 and would absorb 94 per cent. of income if actually purchased. As other items of expenditure are unavoidable, the cost of these is met by cutting food expenditure down to well below the minimum required for the maintenance of health and substituting, within the reduced amount, quantities of cheap starchy foods in place of those necessary to build up health and efficiency."

"The need to increase the unskilled wage level is clamant."

Miss Gibson's survey was made in 1954. Since then the position has grown much worse. But nothing has been done to meet the "clamant need" for higher wages.

The journal "Commercial Opinion" is not a workers' paper. It is a journal for employers, representing the employers' point of view. In its issue of March, 1957, it declared that there was an average shortfall of

£7.11s.5d per month between the income of unskilled workers and their minimum requirements of expenditure. It commented:

"These figures are stark and simple. There is no way of juggling them to belie the story they tell . . . . In general the consequences are misery, malnutrition and a dangerous state of mind."

## **RECKLESS AND IRRESPONSIBLE**

What do you say to that, Mr. Lulofs? Is it "reckless and irrespons-ible?" Or isn't it really reckless and irresponsible to pretend that these stark realities don't exist?

The newspaper "Umteteli wa Bantu" is not a workers' newspaper. As a matter of fact it is owned and published by the Chamber of Mines. Early this year it made a survey of income and expenditure of African families. It concluded —

that an income of £31 per month was necessary for adequate and decent living for a family of five in a Johannesburg African township.

In its recent annual report, the Chamber of Mines announced vastly increased profits. Last year the mining companies distributed £5,815,000 extra in dividends to their fortunate and wealthy shareholders. It is scandalous that they did not pass on a single penny increase to the 360,000 African workers who slave and toil to mine the gold and uranium out of which they collect these enormous profits.

"Umteteli" does not say anything about the wages of the miners. But it is right when it says that Africans in industry need £31 a month — over a pound a day.

And there are others who tell the same story, people far removed from SACTU and the other Congresses. There is Mr. Max Goodman, the Mayor of Johannesburg — a United Party man. There is the Manager of the Non-European Affairs Department of the Municipality of Pretoria.

## **NO OTHER MEANS**

The increase of prices has hit the workers. But the employers have reaped the benefit. It has meant increased profits and prosperity for them. They ignore all the voices warning them that the workers are reaching breaking point. They refuse steadily to allow the workers a share in the prosperity. And then they blame the workers and shout for police when a demonstration takes place like that of June 26.

But before you blame the workers, it would be a good idea to ask yourself: what other means did they have of making known their demands and their desperate position?

European workers have their registered trade unions. They sit down at Industrial Councils and discuss wage agreements with the bosses — agreements which also cover wage-rates for Africans. But the Africans are not there, and no honest person could claim that either the employers or the White trade union leaders care very much about how they can live, or whether they can live, on their wages.

African unions are not registered or recognised. The employers refuse to negotiate with them or even to reply to their demands.

Colour bars prevent Africans getting skilled jobs. The pass laws are specially designed to place them at the mercy of the bosses — and the bosses show no mercy. The Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act is clearly — as we have seen on the Port Elizabeth docks recently, and elsewhere — nothing but a miserable device to rush police, N.A.D. officials and scabs to a job whenever they ask their employers for more money.

### ASK THE GOVERNMENT?

Why don't the workers ask the Government to make a new wage determination? ask some employers, hypocritically. Ask the Government? The Nationalist Government? Do they think the workers are 'mad'? We all know very well what the Nationalist Government thinks about Africans' wages. They say the workers are getting quite enough already — too much.

Look at Port Elizabeth. The stevedoring employers were quite willing and ready to grant their workers an increase of 3s. a day. Then the Government stepped in—in the person of Mr. S. D. Mentz—chairman of the Native Labour Board, and told the employers not to pay the increase.

Here are some extracts from speeches made by Nationalist M.P.'s in Parliament, and reported in Hansard:

"As far as Native wages are concerned, I want to say that I believe that the Natives in this country are being paid enough."

—Mr. N. van Rensburg, Nationalist M.P. for Bloemfontein South. (Hansard: 8.5.57).

"We must not expect the Non-Whites to have as high an intake (of meat) as a man who does a good day's work, because thousands of the non-Whites in our midst stay home for six months in the Reserves or in the Protectorates, and they do not work at all. They therefore require a very small intake of proteins."

—Dr. Carel de Wet, Nationalist M.P. for Vereeniging District. (Hansard: 8.5.57).

"... one point becomes abundantly clear to me, and that is that, our Natives in this country are maintaining a surprisingly high standard of living."

—Mr. J. C. Greyling, Nationalist M.P. for Ventersdorp. (Hansard: 8.5.57).

"When the employers made their offer of 3s., the Department told them it was wrong."

—The Minister of Labour. (Hansard: 8.5.57).

Do the employers seriously suggest that the workers should go along and ask men like these to see that they get higher wages? No. You cannot hide behind the Government. This is a matter between the employers and those whose labour has built up the industry of the country.

In its Memorandum, the Congress of Trade Unions makes three proposals to the employers. They are:

1. An "immediate and substantial" increase in wages of all workers;
2. The immediate payment of a minimum of £1 a day for "so-called unskilled workers";
3. Direct negotiations with trade unions, including African unions.

## REASONABLE AND PRACTICAL

These are by no means "reckless and irresponsible" proposals. In fact they are eminently reasonable, moderate and practical. In this, they are in marked contrast with the unbalanced and thoroughly unreasonable attitude of the authorities and the majority of the employers, especially in industry.

It is very much to be hoped that those to whom the proposals are addressed will treat them with the seriousness and urgency which they merit. The time is due, and overdue, that the employers of our country woke up from the fools' paradise of easy profits and quick returns on capital which they have enjoyed in the past, with never a thought to the welfare and problems of the men and women who sweat and strain to make those profits possible. To them they were just "hands" — strong brown hands, whose owners leave the factory, shop or office at closing time and crowd into buses and trains for their far-off locations, and are conveniently forgotten.

To them the "realities" are the figures in the cash book and the ledger and the share-market reports: not the live men and women who do the work.

Perhaps June 26, 1957, will have helped the gentlemen of the Chambers of Industry and the Chambers of Commerce, and the Chamber of Mines and the Agricultural Unions to open their eyes to the true "stark realities of our industrial economy. The realities of the hundreds of thousands who are desperate and starving, who struggle to bring up families and live decent lives and bravely face the morrow in wretched slums, on beggarly wages.

## BROADER VISION

Perhaps too, it may help some of them towards a broader vision of what is the aim and purpose of our economy — not just to provide big profits, comfortable homes, culture and luxury for a few "captains of industry", but to offer a share of the wealth, comfort, culture and security for all who help to create it.

Payment of decent living wages, may no doubt compel a few marginal enterprises to go out of existence. If they cannot pay a living wage they do not deserve to exist.

But, try to look at the perspectives of our economy as a whole. It has everything to gain and nothing to lose. Undernourished, ill-housed, poorly clad, uneducated, miserable and discontented workers can never form an efficient and highly-productive labour force. Give the workers their due, and you will see the economy of our country flourish.

What industry pays to the workers in the way of increased wages it will reap a hundredfold, for a vast additional sector of the consuming public will come into the market for all types of consumers' goods, opening the road to a new era of prosperity and progress for the country.

## THE ALTERNATIVE

And, what is the alternative to accepting the SACTU proposals? The Memorandum concludes:

The bus boycotts and other incidents which have occurred in recent months are a striking demonstration of the desperate position in which the workers of our country find themselves. They are patient and long-suffering people, but their patience is not inexhaustible.

The workers have not lost the lesson of the boycotts and June 26. They have learnt that they are a mighty force when they act together. And if the employers were not able to learn from June 26, they will be taught many another lesson in the months to come. As the workers flock to the new-type trade unions which SACTU is building they will become increasingly purposeful and effective in their actions.

Sooner or later, the employers will have to give way to the insistent demands of the workers. Let them take note of the instructive awakening of Mr. Ben Schoeman, who thundered in February: "The Government will not give way, no matter whether the boycott lasts a month or six months."

They gave way.

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