

unless you protect and define the native's wages the European will suffer. Now, if an agreement is gazetted and it is not made applicable to the natives it will defeat the object of the agreement because the native will work for lower rates of pay.

Yes, that has happened. But there is this factor; bearing in mind the comparative wages for similar work in other occupations which the European employees have managed to secure for themselves, these are relatively higher wages?-- Yes.

And will they get the same wages laid down ~~xxxxx~~ in respect~~ix~~ of the natives? In that event would it not make it impossible for the natives to get any work in these occupations? Is not that a danger which you think is one of any prominence?--- No, not until the natives become sufficiently proficient to compare favourable with the white man at the same rate of wages. Say that the wage laid down is £7 a week for a skilled man. There is a native who has only half the capacity of the skilled man willing to work for £1-10-0 a week. As such it will be an economic advantage to employ him. If you rigidly enforce the £7 wage for both native and white man it will mean that the native will be driven out of employment, but if the native's standard of efficiency is equal to that of the European, experience has shown that it is not race that wins in the scramble for jobs, but efficiency, skill. There is no danger at all in occupations where the native workers have already acquired the necessary skill. There are occupations where you will find that Europeans, coloured and natives perform the same work, independent of race and dependent upon ability.

Take the printing trade or building, what facility

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is there for a native to acquire skill?-- Theoretically, none. Actually, he has not got a chance in a million.

So in fact the Act excludes natives from these occupations?-- Yes.

And that is still further supported by the Apprenticeship Act?-- Yes.

Now in Cape Town we have been told that in several trades natives have almost completely ousted the coloured people. The first instance mentioned was the dairying trade; do you know anything about the reason for that?-- Yes, their wages are not lower to-day than would apply to coloured people, but there are a large number of native applicants and they are more docile. The wages are lower than those paid to the coloured people before the natives came into that occupation. The natives are more amenable to discipline and more reliable than similar coloured labour. I do not say that they are more reliable than the coloured people but more reliable than the coloured of a similar grade. There is another reason. Work in a dairy involves constant residence, so to speak, on the job. A man must be always there. He must be up at all hours and the coloured man who has a family and has social ties, will want to finish his work and go home.

MR. MOSTERT: Are the natives largely unmarried boys who work on that job?-- Yes, that is why they have ousted the coloured.

MR. LUCAS: One of the reasons that has been suggested for the ousting is that the coloured man will insist upon having certain specific holidays like the 2nd January, which the native does not insist upon?-- I do not think that one day in the year would make any difference but the fact is that the work under present conditions entails such hardships

hardship and sacrifice of personal comfort that a married man or a man with family ties would not be willing to do the work even at a higher rate of pay. Of course the native being willing to take it at a lower rate of pay has ousted the coloured man.

The next trade mentioned in Stone Crushing; does the same reason apply there?-- No. It is from the point of view of the native labourer steady and continuous employment. I would not like to say there is security of tenure, coloured people have very little of that, but the coloured man can shift for himself longer and risk a change of employment better than the native who therefore is more willing to take a job as stone crusher with its low wage but at the same time/relative security of tenure.

DR. MOSTERT: Do you find that the physique of the native is better?-- I would not like to express an opinion on that. I have observed them working and very probably it is so. They are not products of the slums, but the next generation will be.

THE CHAIRMAN: In reply to my last question you said that the native was less able to maintain himself than the coloured man if he was out of employment?-- Yes, he has less of a reserve.

Are you speaking of money saved by him?-- He has less in the way of friends to fall back upon. There is a good deal of freemasonry among the coloured people. They are exceedingly helpful to one another.

More so than amongst the natives?-- I do not know the natives sufficiently.

That is why I wanted to know more about this question; it is one of the big factors in the country, that the natives always share?-- As far as the coloured man's con

concerned that has been one of the surprises to me when I came to South Africa years ago. To a certain extent that applies to the poorer classes everywhere but more so here. The native can fall back upon his friends to some extent but the coloured man can rely also on his closer relations and they will maintain him for a longer period than ordinary friends. The native has not got his close family ties here.

MR. LUCAS: In the reserves in the country districts the native will do anything for another native, and in many of the towns. I was wondering whether Cape Town was different according to what you said?-- In Cape Town the same thing obtains. It cannot obtain to the same extent as among people of the same family. The coloured/^{man} can be be sure of a place to sleep.

THE CHAIRMAN: Will not the native be sure when he knows other natives who have rooms in the vicinity?-- I do not know that.

Is it only an assumption?-- The average standard of the coloured man is higher than that of the native. From a financial point of view he has more saved up than a native.

But think of the reserve in another sense; the native would not be employed regularly all the year round?-- No unemployment amongst them is usually very rife, not as a matter of seasons as among the coloured men. The coloured man is more steadily employed than the native. You do not get the coloured man going about the streets asking people for a job.

Why is the native less continuously employed?-- Belongs to a lower strata of work/^{or} that the coloured man.

But is there not generally more work for that type?-- But
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the supply is so big in the first instance, and also because of the lower standard of work/^{and} less skill ~~is~~ required the labour is less dependable. After all you do not want to change a man whom you employ if a little skill is required, but if there is no skill at all required you dismiss a man if you are slack even for one day.

MAJOR ANDERSON: Has not the native always got to some extent his native reserve to fall back upon? A certain number of Cape Town natives do go back?--- It is a matter of opinion. I know as a matter of fact that they don't go, but I do not want to give evidence on a matter I do not know sufficient about.

MR. LUCAS: The next trade which has been mentioned where there has been displacement is in the Hotel and Boarding House work. I have been told that in many of these places coloureds who have been ^{waitresses} ~~waiters~~ have been replaced by native men?-- Yes.

Do you know anything about the cause of that?-- Yes, there are two reasons for that. Until the standard of the coloured worker was lowered to the present level a man would think twice before accepting a position as a domestic servant; he considered it undignified;--woman's work. The coloured man did not perform the work that is performed today by these natives, but economic pressure and downright starvation has compelled the natives to offer themselves for domestic work at ^{the} low rates which were paid to the coloured women before.

Do you know anything about the growth of the native population in the ^{immediately} areas/surrounding Cape Town, say as far as Wellington?-- Not from personal observation but from things we all hear, but I would not care to give evidence on that question.

Do you know where to get that information most reliably and satisfactorily?-- I wanted myself to get a good deal more information on native questions but I have been unable to do so.

Then one of the points that is frequently made, particularly in Natal, is that most of the natives in a town are tribal natives who come in for a few months for a wage to supplement what they can get from the piece of land which they plough, and that these natives make it impossible to lay down a living wage for detribalised natives, those who are more permanently resident in the town?-- Yes I know about that.

Would you like to express an opinion?-- Yes, this only emphasises the need for the fixing of a minimum living wage in occupations. That would help to secure for the detribalised native work, as against being under-cut by occasional labourers from the countryside.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would not the minimum wage apply to the occasional labourer too?-- Yes, but it would not pay the employer to take one from the country. The inducement today is the lower wage which those who are out to supplement what they earn otherwise, are willing to work for.

SENATOR VAN NIEKERK : Have you had any opportunity of finding out the comparative efficiency of native, coloured and European labour?-- It is difficult to get a scientific determination on this question. You hear all sorts of things. I have heard employers say, with a certain amount of feeling of guilt, that for some work that would sooner employ a coloured man. I do not mean negrophilists but common sense men who seemed as though they were confessing a weakness. There are certain occupations where a coloured man is superior to a white man; there ^{may be} scientific data for that, but I have failed to get it.

~~think~~ I have looked into the matter as far as I could and have consulted people who know the position better than I do, but it is almost impossible to say who is more efficient generally.

Is the status of a coloured man so far as living is concerned higher than that of a native?-- At the moment, yes. There are still sections of the coloured people who are working in skilled occupations and get the same wages as Europeans who are decidedly above the native and lower paid coloured men. It is more a matter of difference in class than in race. There are skilled men who are superior and then you have another class who are just as the native, no difference whatever.

Do they live on the same status?-- Yes, the lower paid coloured man lives in the identical state of the native.

Do you say that the lower paid coloured man has come down a lot?-- Yes.

Is it not a hardship to-day?-- Yes, the gulf between the skilled and the unskilled man among the coloured men has become so wide as between white and coloured. There are lots of men I know whose standard of life is higher than probably one-third of the European population of the country, I mean men getting £7 a week and living in their little homes and sending their children to school, and in fact generally looking very prosperous. Against that there are the dregs of society who hunt about for their food like so much vermin.

MR. MOSTERT: Their social condition is entirely different from that of that ordinary Cape Boy?-- Of these coloured men, yes. In fact they raised themselves while the others came down. I well remember when the difference

between skilled and unskilled labour was very negligible, a matter of 8/- a day for a skilled carpenter and 6/6 for an unskilled. To-day it is 22/- and 3/6.

SENATOR VAN NIEKERK. I can understand the value of the Conciliation Act from the labour point of view but what about the general welfare of the community?-- The primary condition of the Industrial Conciliation Act is to get an organisation and rely upon them to do the best they can for themselves with an occasional bit of assistance, but when the workers are unorganised there is no provision for them under the Industrial Conciliation Act.

The employer may say "My employees want £1 a day" and there is nothing to prevent him paying that?-- There is a good deal in what you say and a study of economic development all over the world shows that in the race between higher wages and the higher cost of living, higher wages will always win. It is true that the cost of living would increase if the wages were increased all round but the competition which exists among manufacturers will always force them to find their economic level. As the worker asks for more pay and as the employer keeps adding to his prices of the goods, the race is always won by the worker who asks for more wages. The employer tries to keep the same ratio but in the race the worker always wins.

MAJOR ANDERSON: By getting higher wages?-- In the course of a generation the working class have managed to double their wages and the cost of living will probably have gone up 20 per cent.

SENATOR VAN NIEKERK: But that is bearing out what I urged; the employers and employees may come under the Industrial Conciliation Act and the result may be to the detriment of the public in general?-- Yes. But the

community is composed of workers to the tune of 75 per cent and perhaps more. Take the community and divide them into two, workers and employers. You will find that owing to pressure and constant striving for higher wages the total workers' wage bill ^{has} ~~is~~ doubled whereas the cost of the articles they produce has only gone up 25 per cent.

Supposing you protect the clothing industry by import tariffs, and supposing the employees had to make unreasonable demands and the employer conceded them. The clothes would be sold to the rest of the people and they would have to pay. There is nobody to control that sort of thing. Even the Minister cannot step in and say that the agreement is too high?— But there are two things which will counteract that. It is known as a matter of fact that increased prices do not automatically follow increased wages. They follow sometimes, and sometimes for a short period only and then the prices fall again. If the increase in wages is granted to only one section of the community and that is followed by an increase in the cost of the article then there would be a great deal in what you say. But if the increase in wages was general, what the men lose on the swings they more than gain on the roundabouts.

You get two sets of people, one calls in the Wage Board and they say "We think that is a fair wage" and it is accepted. They must accept it. On the other hand you have another set who fix their own wages and nobody can say that they are too low or too high?— They should not. The Wage Board comes in arbitrarily. They take into consideration the wages that are paid under the industrial agreement under the Board and they take into consideration the capacity ~~taxpax~~ of that industry to pay the wages.

I am not complaining of the Wage Board but about the Conciliation Board? The Wage Board which is controlled by the Minister acts through the Minister.

But is not that the more efficient?— The Wage Board?

Yes?— I should say in the long run it would be more efficient but to enable workers to get by themselves a reasonable standard of life from a social point of view it is better for them to get an improvement in their conditions than to have it given by the State.

MR. LUCAS: Throughout nearly all the big towns the building trades unions have been strong enough to force the Councils to build houses in native locations with white labour paid for at a rate which you showed this morning is six to ten times what the native gets but he has to pay the rent, how does that strike you?— Well, you will find the trades unions on the whole very firm on conditions of labour and wages being adhered to regardless of anything. Otherwise they would look upon it as the thin end of the wedge.

I know the position very well. There was a controversy in Cape Town and a certain section of the public even to this day maintain that housing would be considerably improved if the cost of building were reduced, which could be done if the building workers were to allow the conditions to be abated. But you will never get the trades unions to ~~accept~~^{accede} to this because they look with a great deal of suspicion on the thin end of the wedge. Consequently they will not budge from trades union principles.

MR. MOSTERT: They do not want any encroachment on their preserves?— Yes, they say that to-day it is a question of building houses for natives and tomorrow it will be stretched to something else.

MAJOR ANDERSON: They do not admit that any industries are open to the natives?-- No. It is the duty of the community which employs labour to pay directly or indirectly a maintenance wage, and if the wage is ⁱⁿ⁻sufficient to provide for housing the general community should provide and not a section of the workers such as the building workers. They say it is not the duty of the building workers to deal with the position but the duty of the community. It is like asking a shopkeeper to sell his material for the buildings at cost or under cost. He says "I will bear a share of the cost through taxation, the same same as any other person." If you ask the worker to relax his standard of price it is tantamount to asking the timber merchant to sell without a profit.

SENATOR VAN NIEKERK: If you concede that the native should be able to build his own house at a lower wage you must also concede that in other work the native must be prepared to take a lower wage?-- No, decidedly not.

But if you concede the one you must concede the other?-- Yes, but I don't concede for a moment that the native should be allowed. But if as you say, you concede the one you must concede the other.

THE CHAIRMAN: With regard to trades unions here, I think you stated this morning that the proportion of Europeans, coloured and natives who were inside the trades unions were roughly the proportions throughout the whole in the trades?-- Yes. The native makes a good trades unionist, and the coloured man also.

In the furniture trade the majority are non-European?-- Yes.

Has this been a recent change?-- Yes.

Since how long has there been a majority of non-Europeans?

Since when has there been a majority of ^{non-}Europeans ?-
 At the time of the last furniture strike in 1921 the members were about even but in 1917 when the Union became affiliated with the Cape Federation, the majority were whites and I was told that the coloured man had not been in the trade for many years.

You say that since 1921 the non-European gradually gained the ascendancy in numbers?-- Yes.

Has a ~~relative~~ relative increase in the number of non-European employees come about in the other unions?-- No. A very striking instance is the biscuit trade which has always been the same. It is difficult to analyse it separately from the baking industry. There have always been a large number of ^{coloured} men in the baking industry and the reason why the biscuit industry ~~did~~ had not more non-Europeans is the large number of females working in it.

SENATOR VAN NIEKERK: To what do you ascribe the ascendancy of the coloured man in the furniture trade?-- To the introduction of machinery and the requirement on a larger scale.

THE CHAIRMAN: There is keen competition in the matter of price?-- Keen competition was in existence long before the new wages were determined, and the wages that are laid down, represent in the smaller factories, a very considerable increase. These were the factories which competed most so the competition was not brought about by the introduction of coloured labour.

There has for some considerable time been very keen competition?-- Yes.

And that would tend to make them go towards cheap

labour?-

labour?-- They would all be in the same position when they had to pay higher prices for their work.

But while there was an advantage to be gained it would be taken and the result would be in the end a larger number of coloured employees?-- Yes, that is also a reason, ^{not} but/in every trade labour saving machinery has been introduced to the same extent as in the furniture trade and it has had a remarkable effect on the apprentices which belong to the furniture trade. White boys would not go and the standard has been reduced to IV, but even Standard IV is not always adhered to. The committee has the right to make exemptions.

There is just one other question I would like to ask you with regard to your point this morning that industries which cannot pay what you at one time called a living wage, and at another time a subsistence wage, should close down. Have you considered that in the case of marginal industries, or marginal firms?-- Yes, when I made the statement I bore in mind industries which on the face of it could not exist and pay subsistence wages. In the marginal cases the government of the country should step in and by a bounty provide the necessary margin for the running of these industries.

In these cases do you think they should be subsidised? Yes. Such a far-reaching principle as this can only be applied in cases where the position is obvious.

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Let us take ~~the~~ the marginal industries of the country namely gold mining and agriculture, would you advocate a subsidy to the gold mining and agricultural industries to enable them to pay a living wage?-- As far as gold mining is concerned, I know it is considered heresy, but I have always

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always held this view and have always expressed it, that the sooner the Government makes up its mind for the gradual closing down of their low grade mines the better it will be for the country as a whole.

So in that case you would not advocate a subsidy?— You may have a subsidy in order to enable them to close down gradually and to enable the workers to be absorbed in other industries.

But subject to that reservation you would not advocate subsidies in those cases?— No.

And with the agricultural industry again, do you advocate subsidising them in order to enable them to maintain a living wage level?— Is that a marginal industry?

I thought that was the marginal industry of the world?— Well, fortunately the world is gradually becoming less and less dependent upon agriculture and more and more upon industry. There was a time when agriculture represented 95 per cent of the world's requirements, but fortunately for mankind that is not the case now and the world is becoming less dependent upon agriculture.

You surely do not visualise a state of affairs when the world will not be dependent upon agriculture at all?— Except to a small extent.

The world cannot carry on without some raw materials?— When I say "agriculture" I do not mean in the narrow sense. Although the rural population in all parts of the world is diminishing the productivity of the soil is increasing. We have to-day a superabundance of agricultural products that we cannot get rid of.

Yes, I know that, but you must admit that the world will always be dependent on the soil for a certain quantity

of its raw materials?— Yes that is so.

So whether the proportion of labour in agriculture goes down to 50 per cent or even to 10 per cent, you must still have these people?— Yes.

Even when you have come down to the irreducible minimum?— Yes.

Would you subsidise these people who are by the nature of things in a marginal industry, in order to keep up a living wage?— No, it is only marginal to-day because it is afraid. If the world's supply of gold was not required to the extent which we can produce and the well-paying, rich mines, could satisfy all requirements then the whole problem would be entirely different.

We have eliminated the gold mines; stick to agriculture?— I used that merely as an illustration. There is some soil which is better than other soil; there is some soil which requires only half the labour to produce well as compared with other soil, and there is soil which is non-paying. We in South Africa are already producing more than we require, and when more is being produced than the world wants you reduce your agricultural activities to the paying section.

What then becomes of the marginal soil?— It becomes profitable. The price of products has dropped because there is a surplus but it does not drop when it only meets the requirements of the community.

So when it just meets the requirements of the community, whether you produce it from the richest soil in the world or not, you are still producing ^{from} the marginal soil?— But the wages will be less if the soil is better. If you can produce a bag of wheat for ten shillings and can get for it ten shillings, you can afford to pay a

But the price would come down to 5/- even if you could supply all your needs from the rich soil?-- No, that is a fallacy. The price of commodities drop when there is a surplus. Low prices to-day have their origin in the world surplus.

MAYOR ANDERSON: Do you then contemplate higher prices for agricultural products?-- Food prices, yes, when over-production is eliminated.

And of these higher prices you are prepared to devote a proportion for higher wages?-- Yes.

MR. MOSTERT: Are you well acquainted with the trades unions in this town?-- Yes.

Are there many artisans out of employment?-- Yes, but the position is not as acute as amongst the unskilled. There is a good deal of unemployment amongst journeymen but that would not be a problem by itself. Owing to the depression many artisans are out of work, may be at the outside 25 per cent.

THE CHAIRMAN: We thank you very much for coming here to give your evidence. Your statements have been very frank and we should be pleased if some of the problems were as simple as you have made them, but you stated frankly that you do not know the conditions of the big native population behind and that you have only seen the small/^{town}section, but we have to bear in mind also the great population behind?-- I must thank the Commission for the indulgence shown me and for the very patient hearing they have given me. I have given the whole problem a good deal of thought and have looked upon it as a question affecting South Africa and typical of South Africa.

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