

Box 3301  
17/3/35

E5-6

Dear Koston

I am returning the 2 articles. We again could not get hold of Lake in time. The "wardanger" article is lively & comprehensive - we are for it as it stands. The "native question" is also first-rate, but some minor slips of phraseology should, we think, be rectified:

page 2: note the typists' error on line 19: "less than 10, 000 million morgen."

page 3: line 13, - change "seems very silly" to "absurd."

page 3, last paragraph: "our unquestionable dependence" should be "their unquestionable etc" We must not identify ourselves with the European section of the workers or write as if we were addressing only Europeans, even though it might turn out in practice that our "Spark" is read only by Europeans.

The last paragraph on page 4 treads on thin ice. Are the Chamber of Mines' and the mine-managers' protests against the Minimum Wage Bill a genuine expression of the antagonism of bourgeois mining interests to these measures, or are they merely a hypocritical gesture towards the local bourgeoisie in secondary industry, since it is these latter who will be called upon to foot the bill if the legislation goes through? We urgently need an analysis of the significance of the Minimum Wage Bill; I suggest that you or Burlak get busy on this. We <sup>have</sup> will write more on the matter and our conclusions could form the basis of an article in No. 2 if the party reaches some sort of agreement on this question. In the meantime I think this paragraph could be phrased in a more equivocal manner, say by cutting out "of the Chamber of Mines" and making "protest" plural - protests.

In the final paragraph, the writer speaks for the party, so that the article constitutes a party document; it therefore becomes of paramount importance to choose our words carefully.

(1) "The agrarian revolution is the fundamental



task that must be tackled first." I think this should be cut out and replaced with something on the following lines: "In winning the support of the rural native workers in the task of overthrowing capitalism and breaking the chains of imperialist domination, our main slogans must be..... etc etc."

(2) "We must strive for that, strive for the raising of the wage of all the unskilled workers." This also should be cut out and replaced with: "The Workers' Party must lead the struggle of the urban workers, of All the unskilled workers, for the raising of their wage." The word "we" can so easily be construed as meaning "the Workers' Party" instead of (as the writer no doubt intends) "the workers" — for of course it is by the struggle of the workers and not only of their party that wages can be raised.

(3) The concluding words: "can bring about the downfall of tottering Capitalism..... Africa", should be changed to: "can lead the workers to their supreme task of accomplishing the downfall of tottering Capitalism..... Africa." By making this change, we emphasize the importance of the class, (led by its party) in bringing about the overthrow. This is better than speaking of the party (supported by the class) as the dominant factor, because such a phrasing may possibly provide hostile critics with "quotations" upon which to base an accusation of "Blanquist tendencies." Even our local "vanguard of the proletariat" have become proficient in the Stalinist art of ripping passages out of their context and using them to condemn us "out of our own mouths." They will of course do this in any case with the most carefully phrased declarations but we should nevertheless minimise this danger by a choice of words meticulous to the point of positive pedantry. We must give them no handle.

From the quality of the three Cape Town articles, I am beginning already to think in terms of a printed paper. We have the revolutionary journalist staff — the cash for printing should follow quite soon.

I will write you again tomorrow,  
Fraternally  
R. Lee.



E5

THE NATIVE QUESTION

What IS the Native Question as it meets us in South Africa? City dwellers see only a small part of it and do not easily <sup>reach</sup> a clear understanding of the various factors that enter into it. For the ~~main~~ Native Question is the Land Question, which grows more urgent with every year that passes, but which is meanly evaded by every Government in turn, because the only solution is one that no Capitalist Administration will accept or even consider.

More than a century and a half has passed since European pioneers, trekking eastwards, came into contact with the African tribes who form the very large majority of those now generally known throughout the Union as "the Natives". Gradually, through more than a hundred years of raids and reprisals, the men with the horses and guns pushed back and hemmed in the men on foot who wielded less effective weapons. But the pioneers were farmers who wanted cheap labour for the land they had won, and who found that the Natives were both cheap and willing workers. In time many of them took service on the white men's farms and in their households, and later on, with the discovery of diamonds and gold, large numbers <sup>were</sup> ~~brought~~ brought as labourers to the mining centres, the seaports, and the railways. It soon became <sup>obvious</sup> ~~obvious~~ that the development of the resources of the Union depended on the labour of the Native population and the leaders of industry set to work with rapacious eagerness to make full use of this magnificent, ~~reservoir~~ <sup>this</sup> ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~South~~ ~~African~~ ~~unskilled~~ ~~worker~~ /astonishingly cheap and manageable supply.

From the outset these Native workers were exploited to the uttermost. Their bewilderment, due to the sharp change from a subsistence economy to a money-wage economy, their ignorance of industrial conditions elsewhere, the very simple standard of <sup>living</sup> ~~life~~ that had sufficed them in their tribal life on the land, made it absurdly easy for the capitalist mine-owners to impose upon them hard conditions and the meanest possible wage. Other employers followed the lead of the mine magnates and thus the scandalously low wage of the South African unskilled worker was established and is maintained.

Moreover, as the mines and related industries rapidly developed, and, in spite of busily persuasive recruiting agents, ~~the~~



the required number ran short, the Government came to the rescue of its masters, the Chamber of Mines, by means of direct taxes specially devised to force more and more Natives out from the Reserves into the industrial sphere, and indirect taxes in the shape of excessively heavy Customs duties on the cheap goods imported from Britain almost exclusively for Native use. These abnormal taxes, both direct and indirect, are still in force without any alleviation.

Before considering the distribution of the Native people in the spheres of agriculture and industry, it is advisable to remind ourselves of the proportion of European and Native elements in the population of the Union, and of the distribution of land between them. Of the whole population of over 8 millions (European, Native, Asiatic, and Mixed) the Natives form over two-thirds. The Europeans are well under 2 millions, the Natives are well over 5½ millions.

How is the land of the Union at present distributed between the European and Native population? Over 96 million morgen is held by Europeans, while less than 10,000 million morgen is held by Natives. If we think of the land as divided among the population individually, there would be about 51 morgen for each European, but only 1¼ morgen for each Native.

It is not surprising therefore to see in the Official Year Book of the Union that the density of the population in the rural areas is 1.44 Europeans per sq.mile, but 9.67 non-Europeans. It is very significant that in the comparatively thickly populated rural areas in the Kingwilliamstown Division, the number of Europeans rises to 4 and ~~even~~ even 5 per sq.mile, while in the neighbouring areas, occupied by small ~~European~~ Native farmers, there are 100 to the sq.mile.

The following Table, taken from the Official Year Book, throws light on the distribution of the land and the size of the farms which are in the hands of Europeans:

Table ought to be shown complete on one page if possible



This Table is worthy of a little detailed consideration. The first three lines indicate the small farmers, of whom there are 20,873, owning a total of only 605,600 morgen. The fourth line indicates that 30,334 middle-farmers own 9,098,000 morgen, which is nearly as much as the amount of land owned by the whole Native population. The fifth and sixth lines together give 32,787 big farmers owning in all 33,492,000 morgen, which is 32% of all the occupied land of South Africa. The last four lines show that 10,955 farmers, the biggest landowners in the country, own 53,479,000 morgen, which is more than 50% of all the occupied land of South Africa.

Such figures as the above make the common talk of segregation seem very silly. In 1913 the <sup>first</sup> Government of the Union took what appeared to be a bold step by passing the Natives Land Act, which forbade the hiring or purchasing of European-owned land (except in Native areas and in areas to be named), and provided for the eviction of such tenants. The M.P.'s ~~forgot~~ ignored <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ fact which many of them must have known, that many hundreds of Natives, making some with their families ~~many~~ thousands of people, had ~~for~~ for generations been rent-paying tenants on huge European farms which the owners could not or would not develop, finding it easier to let Natives hire a few morgen and potter away at their old-fashioned small-scale tillage and stock-rearing while the European landlords collected the rents. Even M.P.'s must have known that thousands of people cannot be ~~turned out~~ moved out unless some place is made available where they may move in. Commissions have sat and have made recommendations but no <sup>n</sup> constructive action has been taken. After twenty years of controversy and Commissions the only considerable areas that have been suggested for Native occupation lie in the semi-desert fringes of the Kalahari and in the <sup>comparatively</sup> empty spaces of Bechuanaland, IF and WHEN that semi-desert Protectorate can be acquired from Britain! *But segregation, however it might be accomplished, would mean the slow suffocation of the Natives.*

*their* The unashamed land greed of the Europeans of the Union and our unquestionable dependence on the black man's labour in agriculture, industry, and commerce, amply account for the presence of many Natives in mining and urban areas and on European-owned farms. Of the total 5½ million Natives, over 1½ million are a



landless peasantry, living and working on land owned by white men. These include about half a million of constant farm labourers at miserable wages, so various and so vague that no commission of enquiry has ever succeeded in defining them; some six or seven hundred <sup>thousands</sup> seasonal farm labourers, also at the meanest rates of pay; and another half million of the miscalled "squatters" or labour-tenants, on varying but never adequate terms. All these are so strictly and harshly controlled by the Masters and Servants Act, the Native Service Contract Act, and the Pass Laws, that they cannot be classed as free labourers. Their condition is that of oppressed drudges, living in serfdom, and this hard FACT is not in the least altered by the plea so often heard that <sup>in</sup> many cases masters are ~~kind~~ "kind" to their labourers. *So may the executioner be kind to his victim.*

Considerably over half a million Native workers are in mining compounds or in urban locations. They are subject to elaborate regulations and restrictions, approaching to a state of perpetual Martial Law. <sup>rapidly</sup> ~~A~~ increasing number of Natives engaged in urban occupations are wholly detribalised; they are town-dwellers of the second or third generation, without any footing in any ~~Reserve~~ "Reserve" or rural area; they are in every way fit and able to take their place in a civilised society.

After even a brief survey of the Native record as a worker, indispensable to the development of the country, strong and healthy under any reasonable conditions of housing and food, willing, cheery, dependable, the systematic crushing repression to which he is subjected would be incredible, did we not know the essential nature and ~~working~~ methods of Capitalism. Since the aim of Capitalist enterprise is the making of profits, there is a tireless vigilance among the managers and their subordinate officials, all directed to this one end. "Keep the work going ahead and keep expenses down. Don't let trouble begin; clap a stopper at once on the fellows who start agitating for the right to organise, and for this and that. Keep the work going at top speed and with full efficiency; and keep expenses down."

Industry, however, and the wages it offers to the workers will follow the ups and downs of Capitalism in decline. There is even now a cleavage in the ranks of the Capitalist/class, manifested in ~~the~~



Minister of Labour's

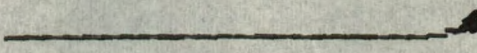
strong recent/protest, of the Chamber of Mines against the Minimum Wage Bill followed by the Minister of Labour's refusal to recognise the wage agreement for the Cape Peninsula building industry, his reason being the failure of the agreement to provide for an increase in the wage rates of unskilled workers. The rogues of Capitalism are falling out for the time being, but the honest folk, the workers, will not easily or at once come by their own. There is much preliminary work to be done and the Workers Party is making ready to do it.

The emancipation of the workers, white and black, the opening up of equal opportunity for all, can only come through the overthrow of Capitalism and Imperialism. But what the rural Natives (and they are in the large majority) need first of all is land. ~~The trans-fer of land is the fundamental task the must be tackled first.~~ <sup>revolution</sup> Our main slogans must be: "Land to the Natives", and "Every man has the right to as much land as he can work". For the industrial Native workers, on the other hand, the immediate pressing need is an adequate living wage. ~~We must strive for that, strive for the raising of the wage of ALL the unskilled workers.~~ And further, we must make known to the urban workers the needs of the peasants, their fellow-workers on the land; and we must make known to the peasants the needs of their fellow-workers in the towns. By uniting urban and rural workers and upholding in combined effort the common interests of ALL the workers, the Workers Party, strengthened by an ever-growing membership, and supported by the masses of the workers through the length and breadth of the Union, ~~the Workers Party~~ <sup>tottering</sup> can bring about the downfall of Capitalism and the establishment of a Soviet South Africa.

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