

This the Chamber of Mines has still to learn. The disease which eats at the heart of the entire population of South Africa is the disease of uncivilised labour conditions, of migratory labour chained with one foot to a miserable stretch of land in the reserves and condemned to a life of toil for a wage which cannot keep body and soul together; of rigid colour-bar, reaction refusing to the African worker elementary democratic rights of trade union organisation and collective bargaining; of the mass starvation and poverty of the millions who make up this country, in order to provide seventeen million pounds profit annually to those who neither work the mines, nor suffer in them.

There can be only one cure for such a disease. That is the abolition of such a primitive and inhuman system, and the establishment of living wages for all our citizens.

The Chamber of Mines will not adopt that cure. Nor will the Government which is proving to be the faithful mouthpiece of the Chamber.

Despite their refusal, I do not think the patient will die of the disease. Whatever might have been our opinions in the past, the miners strike has proved that the African miners will force the cure sooner or later, despite any opposition the mining magnates and the stock-exchange gamblers might offer. For these miners are men fighting for their lives. And the fight to live is not easily abandoned.

I could attempt to answer, in this booklet, each and every allegation, each and every falsehood, distortion and misrepresentation made by the Chamber and the Government, ^{and the Press.} It is not necessary to add a further opinion to the many already expressed. The time will come when the African miners for themselves will disprove every contention of the mining owners, even those false opinions which neither the strike nor the case which arose out of it have disproved.

Round ^{One} of the miners fight for life is over. It has proved that there is a great and unquenchable thirst amongst the African miners for organisation - trade union organisation. And the

African Mine Workers' Union which led them well in the days before and during the strike is still there, organising for round two of a fight which can neither stop nor be stopped until it has been won.

It has proved that the understanding of trade-unionism, of its discipline and unity have spread far and wide amongst these, the most backward and illiterate section of South Africa's workers. For never has there been a strike of miners so disciplined, so united across racial and tribal divisions, so careful to avoid useless acts of violence, stone-throwing, compound breaking.

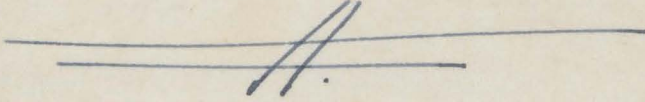
It has proved that only one side - the side of the workers - was there any sense of responsibility. Only the workers made any attempt to avoid the strike, to negotiate, to discuss, to hesitate. While the employers and the Government in all their actions, have been characterised with the most criminal and careless irresponsibility - refusing to negotiate, refusing to implement findings of Commissions of Inquiry, provoking to strike, and then using violence to quell the situation they had provoked, without consideration of life or limb of the miners.

Now, as Round Two opens, the miners know where they stand. They know who are their friends and who their enemies. They know now that the Government is no impartial arbiter where the mining interests are concerned. They know now that they whole armed and terror force/of the State, the police, the courts, the Cabinet, the prisons and the Native Affairs Department are on the side of the mine-owners. They know now that no fear of illegality of their action will deter the Government or the Chamber from the most reckless terror to keep wages below the living line. They know that amongst all sections of the people, there is a small but growing section which supports them in their claims, which will stand with them in all their efforts, despite the danger and the reprisals which are taken.

These things learnt will be weapons for their victory in the next round. And while the miners have learnt them, the millions of South Africa's oppressed African workers and peasants have learnt

141.

and understand too. No future fight for liberty, for living wages, for progress can be the same again after these great lessons. That is the contribution of the African miners to South Africa's future. That is the debt that all South Africa owes those gallant 100,000 who fought for life in the second week of August.



Collection Number: A2535

Collection Name: Abram Fischer Papers

PUBLISHER:

Publisher: **Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand**

Location: **Johannesburg**

©2016

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or

omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document forms part of a collection, held at the Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.