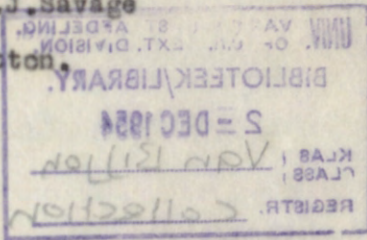


~~205~~

I N D E X.

	pages.
Mr. Sam Echo. (continuation of evidence)	7070 ----- 7077
Mr. M.J.Adams (Master Builder & Member of City Council)	7078 ----- 7106.
Mr. J.McOmbring (President of African Aboriginal Association)	7107 ----- 7122.
Mr. B.H.Harris (Chairman of Dairymens' Association)	7123 ----- 7128.
Revd. C.H.J.Savage	7129 ----- 7145.
Mr.A.O.Sutton	7146 ----- 7149.



NATIVE ECONOMIC COMMISSION27th April, 1931CAPE TOWN

Dr. J. E. Holloway (Chairman)

Major R. W. Anderson,

Mr. A. E. Mostert,

Dr. H.C.M. Fourie,

Dr. A. W. Roberts

Mr. F.A.W. Lucas, K.C.

Senator P.W. le R. van Niekerk

Mr. C. Faye (Secretary)

The Commission commenced proceedings at 9-30 a.m.

MR. SAM HOHO ( FURTHER EXAMINED )

THE CHAIRMAN: Will you carry on from where you left off on Saturday?-- Yes. I was dealing with the question of wages. I was saying that the native should receive at least 6/6 a day and I was pointing out what his expenses would be. I want to mention now the things that the native would buy towards his requirements. The native makes a monthly contribution to his organisation, a contribution for church dues.

DR. ROBERTS: How much church dues?-- Five shillings per quarter. That is in respect only of the husband and if he has a wife who is also a member of the church, she has also got to pay five shillings. If the man has a family of five or six and some of them are as big as their parents they are also admitted into the church as full members and make the same payment.

That is the rule in your church?-- Yes, the Wesleyan Church to which I belong, as do most of the natives. Then there is also insurance which has to be paid by the native amounting to 2/6 per month.

MR. LUCAS: Insurance against what?-- Burial insurance.

Do

Do many natives have that?-- Yes, a good many. They understand it now. Formerly they did not understand the system but now it is accepted by large numbers.

Who runs the insurance?- The companies in the various towns.

Are there many natives running that insurance?- No, they would like to do so, but they are unable to; they are too poor. Then there is 2/6 per month and some of them pay 5/-; and rent for their houses where they stay. I will deal with the locations where the natives are located to stay. We have got a place newly made, Langa.

We have been both to Ndabeni and Langa?- Well, I know a lot about Langa. The native pays a rent presently of 15/- per month, a hut where he stays. In addition to that he has to pay for transfer from Langa to town, 8/6 per month. And then as you know he has to pay the poll tax £1-10-0. Most of the natives here are paying £1-10-0; natives who have got their wives at Langa.

DR.

~~MR.~~ ROBERTS: That is not the poll tax; there is the general tax and poll tax?-- But they have got to be paid by one person.

Now with regard to the rents which the natives pay: I have told the Commission already about the expense of food, coal, wood and so forth, and there is also clothing, as I mentioned on Saturday. Now if these amounts are added together <sup>they</sup> ~~it~~ will come to <sup>a large sum</sup> ~~£2~~ that the native will have to pay when he goes to shop as much as the man who gets £30 a month and buys just the same as the natives. But how is the native going to be able to buy all these requirements if he only gets £1-4-0 a week? He gets things on credit and as a result he has got a bad name in the country. It is considered as an insult to the State that Christians

are accused of not paying but the reason is that the native does not get sufficient money to live on, and therefore what has been suggested by Mr. Berman and myself is quite reasonable.

And now I want to deal with some legislation that strongly affects the natives. The Industrial Counciling Act has been dealt with fairly thoroughly by Mr. Berman, but there is a section to which I should like to draw attention, Section 17, disallowing the right of native railway workers and agricultural labourers to organise. I refer to pass bearing natives. And these are the two places which employ natives to a very large extent. I would suggest that the Act should be amended in order that those who are excluded should be allowed to come in. Most of my people work in agriculture. It is not white men's work but the work of natives and poor coloured men, and these people should be well represented too.

On the railways you will find married men who have been working for the railways for 20 years, getting 4/3 a day, men who understand almost everything about the railways. They are able to carry out instructions and in some cases they are even sufficiently educated to be able to see the plans and carry out the work. These men are getting 4/3 a day and have in many cases to support a home and a family. Well, that is not good enough. These are people who belong to South Africa; they are not here temporarily, recruited from somewhere else. They have to stay here and die here and in the meantime are helping the Treasury of this country.

I am coming now to another law which came into force in 1926, the law known as the Colour Bar. In South Africa, as far as we know, there was a Colour Bar Act mostly operating in

the mines , and affecting natives and other non-Europeans who worked there. But this one of 1926 has made the country for the native much worse. I must put it that way, not bad, but worse, because it deprives the backbone of this country from handling the machinery. I wonder in what way a race can progress when even when they have the skill they are not allowed to make use of it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you know of any law which has kept the skilled native out of employment?-- No, but they are <sup>the</sup> learning/trades.

But they learnt some of these trades before the law came in?-- There are some of them who know something about the skilled working of iron and so on, but now it is no use for a native to clamour to get some boys educated for that kind of work. The law is there already.

You may be surprised to find that the law is not enforced?-- But I know of a law which is there.

It is on the Book?-- Yes, it is on the Statute Book of the country.

Your point is that it makes the native frightened to make a start learning his children a trade because ~~it~~ he cannot make use of it?-- No, he could not go to the expense. He could not find the money to have his boy trained in that way.

In dealing with the law in a country like South Africa which is dominated mostly by the black man I suggested something because I have no power to do more. The Government has appointed a Commission to look into these matters, and I suggest to the Commission that the law should be scrapped.

Now with regard to No. 4, there is a great complaint on the part of the natives because they are not allowed to be represented at the Conference which is held once in two years. I refer to the Geneva Conference. It is no

use saying that we have not got capable natives to represent the opinion of people in this country, both black and white workers. We have got them but when the time comes when they apply for this representation their request is declined and there is no reason given except that of colour which works more in South Africa than the knowledge of the man. We wonder why we are treated in that way in this country of our own; there is no getting away from the fact that in this country the natives are treated as slaves slaves.

Do you know anything about the treatment of slaves?— Yes, if you are a slave you know you are, and there is nothing to worry about. You have to be satisfied with what you get. You know you have to live under those conditions and you do not worry. You even get your food provided for you. But if you are told that you are as good as the other man, equal to other men yet what applies to you is the same as applied to slaves in the past, and that makes you exercise your senses. We ask the Government of South Africa to allow the natives to send their own representatives to the Geneva and other Conferences.

There is another point I would like to raise and I will not go too far into it because it has already been touched upon by Mr. Berman. But I want to mention it. There is also now before the House here a Bill which has been brought forward by the Minister of Justice, the contract Bill for natives on the farms for a period of three years. That provides that if a native happens to do anything wrong his master is entitled to give him strokes with a cane.

Those two main points in that Bill if it happens to go on the Statute Book will stand very badly in the eyes of the country at this day under a Christian Government, that a native, a man of the soil should contract for three

years, and if a mistake happens he must get strokes with the cane. We protest against that Bill, it is no good to the country whatsoever. Let the farmers if they want labourers to do their work pay those who come forward to do it, let any one contract himself if he wants a contract, according to his own thinking, but it must not be a law placed on the Statute Book of the country.

I maintain strongly that these two, the Colour Bar and this Bill are wrong, and the natives are very much upset about them.

And now I come to the last point that I want to draw attention to. We are told by the Nationalist Government that the native, particularly of the Cape Province, are allowed now to be registered voters, and that these votes are no good to him and should be taken <sup>away,</sup> ~~away~~ some other kind of votes being put in their place. We cannot understand that. It has been before the House of Parliament and an attempt was made to get it through but there had to be a two-thirds majority, and luckily it did not secure that. It is now before a Select Committee.

THE CHAIRMAN: What Bill are you referring to?— The Franchise Bill.

That has nothing to do with us and therefore we do not want to hear evidence on it; the matter has not been referred to us to report upon; we are dealing with social and economic conditions and not with political?— I am sorry, I thought everything had to be considered by the Commission.

No, that is altogether too wide; however that question has nothing to do with this Commission?— Well, seeing that you are not empowered to consider that I will say nothing further except to say that I shall be pleased to answer any questions that may be put to me

MR. LUCAS:

What class of native is it who has gone to live at places like Kensington and Windermere?-- I should think all classes of natives.

We are told that there is a lot of lawlessness there?-- Yes, and there are also church people there as far as I know.

What are the reasons why the native people have gone to live out there?-- As far as I know it is a question of high rents in other places.

Do you think they live cheaper there?-- Yes, they cannot afford to pay the high rents charged elsewhere.

Do you know anything about the dock labourers?-- Yes.

How many days a week do they work; say over a period of three months, on the average?-- He is very likely to finish his work in three or four days, probably in two sometimes. It is very bad.

THE CHAIRMAN: But when the boats are in they work more than eight hours do they not; don't they work until the job is finished?-- Yes, but a person who is employed to-day might not work tomorrow because his job is taken up by someone else. He is lucky to get a ticket to-day and one the day following.

DR. ROBERTS: But if he works after 5 o'clock, say for three or four hours, is not that counted as a whole day?-- Overtime.

THE CHAIRMAN: How much is paid for overtime, time and a half?-- They are paid for overtime at so much an hour, but it is not one thing.

MAJOR ANDERSON: Mr. Berman expressed the view to us the other day that natives should be paid the same wage as a European?-- Yes, for the same kind of work.



Do you approve of that?- Yes.

Are you not afraid that the work will go to the white man?- No, it is no use having such a fear.

We have had that fear expressed by natives in other parts of the country?-- It is only those who are not acquainted with this kind of work. We deny that. The same wages should be paid for equal work whether it is done by black or white.

DR. ROBERTS: For the same quality of work?- Yes, there is no hardship in that.

MR. MARTIN JAMES ADAMS, examined:

THE CHAIRMAN: You are a Member of the City Council and a master builder?-- Yes. I am interested in many societies who are interested in the native and similar people.

Can you give us your views on any of the list of topics in which you are interested?-- In the first place I do not think you can touch on the economic condition of the natives without reference to the coloured people and also the Europeans.

Our terms of reference include the effect on the natives of these two classes?-- Yes, because both the coloured and the white man <sup>are</sup> competing for the unskilled work that is usually done by the native.

Now my firm employs something like 400 natives on our works. We can of course employ coloured people/and do, but the large number is usually made up of natives, and the foreman in charge of the work states that the native is employed because of his physique; he is able to give a bigger day's work than the Cape coloured man for instance.

Natives are coming into this area in increasing numbers all the time and the result is that there is a very big displacement so far as the Cape coloured man is concerned. It is really very serious for Cape Town. You will probably have noticed that the Mayor and Mayoress have had to start soup kitchens in several places here, and there are hundreds of these people constantly going there for meals.

Do you ascribe that to the competition of the natives,

or the general economic stress?-- Partly to both I suppose but certainly the native is getting the work to-day that the coloured man got in the past.

Why must the native get it, purely because of his better physique?-- Very largely that but for some reason or another this coloured man, as I think you stated the other day, between two mill stones. He is losing his skilled work to the European and his unskilled work to the native.

But does the native take the unskilled work at a lower rate of pay?-- I think possibly he does, but so far as the builders are concerned we made an agreement among ourselves that we would pay our labourers 27/6 a week. I do not know that that applies to all builders, but it certainly applies to a large number of them. I would think however that the average rate of wages for the native in this centre, that is, the unskilled man, is probably in the neighbourhood of 4/- a day. The Government are only paying 3/- a day at the Docks. I do not know whether I am right in referring so much to the coloured people.

That interests very much. One of our terms of reference is the influence on the native in urban areas of European and coloured, so that is very much to the point?-- Well, you are no doubt aware that there are 132, 130,000 coloured people in the Cape Peninsula and some people have felt lately that the displacement of these people both from skilled trades which they have been doing for generations, and lately from the unskilled work by the natives has become so serious that they have formed <sup>a</sup> a society to see what they can do to protect these people

people and generally see what can be done for them.

What society is this?— They call it the Cape Coloured and European Council. It has only lately been formed but it promises to develop into a big society.

Is it a Joint Council on the same lines as the European and Native joint councils of Europeans and Indians such as they have in Natal?— Yes.

This Society thinks that the way to help these people would be to try for a better wage rate for them and to assist in matters of housing, and to obtain for them better education facilities. I think that the rate of wages for unskilled labour should be increased. I think it should be legalised as a matter of fact if that were possible. I would suggest that the present rate that was fixed by the builders 27/6 say or 30/- a week should become the legal rate and that it should be increased gradually until it became 50/- or 60/- a week. I am interested in housing of the coloured people and as you know the Government have given the Municipalities money at a sub-economic rate to enable them to build houses for the coloured people.

I might say that we are also building houses with ~~xxxx~~ sub-economic money for white people who do the same class of work, labouring work.

are you referring now to the housing loans from the Health Department?— Yes, that money at 3 per cent. I am a member of the Housing League Utility Company. We have already built 26 houses but we have got plans and all the necessary preparations made to build 300 more. The 300 that we are to build are for whites because the land was given to us to build for whites only. We could not get

it to build for coloured. but in that connection I might say that the Municipality have got a scheme ready to build a large number of houses for coloured people of more or less the same type with sub-economic money.

May I now go on to the housing conditions of the natives. There was a great deal of talk about the Langa Township. Ndbeni as you know has been condemned by the Medical Officer of Health and it is the intention of the Municipality I think to demolish that as soon as possible. They cannot of course do that until they have got sufficient accommodation for these people at Langa. I am not one of those people who entirely condemn the Municipality's scheme at Langa. In the first place it is beautifully situated, the buildings are well built; there are little things that need adjustment but I think they are quite capable of adjustment such as the question of rents and the single quarters about which a great deal has been said, no doubt with some justification. It seems to me that that is capable of adjustment too and I know people who are making it their business to try and adjust this in a satisfactory way both for the Municipality and for the natives.

I think the time will come when Langa will be considered a very satisfactory proposition. I do not think that the Municipality have anything to be ashamed of. I think that probably they have taken the first big step in the uplifting of the natives in the matter of his housing, and I am honestly of the opinion that in the course of time Langa will be satisfactory in all respects including paying its way.

There

There are 800 acres of land; it is capable of enormous development. The Municipality were unfortunate in that they had to build at the most expensive time and naturally the rents were high as a consequence. In addition to that they gave the natives drainage and roads and other amenities. Of course ratepayers will be ratepayers and will grumble if they do not get a return on their money. But in the end I believe that Langa should be made perfectly satisfactory and I think it will probably be the best home in South Africa for natives before many years are over.

Now with reference to the point in your terms of reference dealing with the legal settlement of disputes, I do not think there is any machinery set up for settling disputes between natives and Europeans and I think that some <sup>and more</sup> provision should be made, because as these people get more into industry there are bound to be differences, and as differences arise there are bound to be little disputes. If there are proper means for handling them a lot of friction and unpleasantness might be saved. I do not know what to suggest as to how provision should be made. No doubt the members of the Commission would be able to do that better than I.

MAJOR ANDERSON: Do you mean all kinds of disputes?— It is industrial disputes that I have in mind.

I have quite a lot to do with the Industrial Conciliation Act. I have been on a committee dealing with the Act and its operations pretty well ever since the Act was enacted. But this Act does not help the native very much. It cuts him out so that it does not concern him. I am also a member of the Apprenticeship Committee for the Building Trade. Now there is no colour bar in this Act; it is a fact that both coloured and the natives are almost

almost excluded. The natives are totally excluded. I do not remember a native coming before the Building Trades Apprentices Committee for indenture at any rate. But the coloured boy is being largely excluded also because the Apprenticeship Committee lays down that his educational qualification should be Standard VI, and the school facilities for the coloured people here are very limited. I think I am correct in stating that while there are 22,000 European children at school in the Cape Peninsula, there are no more than 2,000 non-Europeans at school.

I think the social effect of the mixing of natives with coloured here is bad. Both these people look down upon the other as being inferior and of course this leads to friction. The coloured man certainly looks down on the native and the native thinks that the coloured man is not his equal; and they often quarrel.

In suggesting that the wages of the unskilled should be fixed at a higher level I have not overlooked the fact that it might have the effect of attracting large numbers of natives to urban areas. Now one feels that even if it does have that effect one is not justified in keeping down the wages of the unskilled worker, especially when you take into account the fact that quite a large number of Europeans to-day are seeking unskilled work.

How best to do that I don't know but it did occur to me that if the Labour Bureau could compile accurate statistics as to the requirements of labour in the main urban European areas, and if there could be a central co-ordinating office and such information compiled say weekly, and posted to all railway stations in the Union to be posted on a board for the information of all seeking employment in

the larger towns, it might be a way out of the difficulty to some extent. Probably many a man would be saved his fare and probably great disappointment at the end of his journey if anything like that could be done. It is merely a suggestion which occurred to me because I feel it is important, if you are going to increase the wages in the towns which will no doubt attract people from outside who are unaware of the conditions obtaining and have to depend on rumours, to take some steps to save men from risking their last few pounds or shillings to go to these centres in the hope of finding work. If there is little hope there should be some means of their finding that out before making the journey and if real ~~remit~~ reliable information could be posted up at the railway stations it would result of many staying where they were in preference to going on a hopeless quest.

Would there not be an enormous rush to the places where there was a demand and money wasted that way?-- Well I think if the Labour Department would deal with it in the way I have in mind they could state in the information not only that work was available but how much was available.

But they would not know how many would go. Supposing 200 natives were wanted in Cape Town and that was broadcast throughout the country the result might be that you would have a thousand here looking for the 200 jobs. There is no way of controlling how many will come from each area?-- No, but probably the central office would know how to handle a position like that. I think a scheme such as I have suggested ought to be of some use because to-day there is no system at all; they simply come along on the off-chance of getting a job.

I have prepared a few notes more or less on the lines of



of what I have spoken; I don't know whether you will permit me to read them?

Are they points which you have already covered?-- To some extent but definitely stating what I feel with regard to the native and also with regard to the poor white.

Certainly if they contain material which you have not touched upon; will you please read your statement?-- Yes.

Native Vote: The native worker, following the bad example of the European trade unionists, thinks that all he desires is to be had through the vote. There are surely sufficient failures in recent history to convince a native leader that he is going the wrong way to help his people; and the ~~sooner~~ sooner he realises that, the better for those he hopes to serve.

I see no need for depriving the native in the Cape Province of his vote. He has certainly not abused this privilege during the past half century; indeed it would be little short of a crime to take it away from him; at the same time he is living in a fool's paradise if he thinks that through the vote he can improve his economic position for many years to come.

The native leaders and their friends should be made to realise ~~xxx~~ as soon as possible that on both sides of the House of Assembly there is opposition to his gaining his ends through the vote, and the power of that opposition is altogether too strong for him and his friends to overcome.

Leaders would be well advised to cease making enemies of politicians and to turn their attention to the obtaining

obtaining of better working conditions and higher wages for their people; by devising means whereby they could bring about more skill and efficiency of production by native workers in the work in which they are engaged; and by learning trades to which they can obtain access from time to time.

This kind of work would of course not be so spectacular as decrying prominent politicians from a soap box, but it would be doing useful work; while the soap box effort is largely mischievous.

Poor Whites: The economic aspect of the native question embraces, in addition to the native, the coloured and white unskilled worker. It is quite impossible to fix wages rates for the native without taking the others into account, therefore our large unemployed white unskilled population should also receive the serious consideration of this Commission

These people are coming into the towns in ever increasing numbers, many of them without any qualification whatever to enable them to earn a livelihood.

In other countries you will find a clearly defined section of the population who do the unskilled work; in South Africa the native is expected to do it, but this is not working out for the good of the country. We need avenues of employment for those of our people who are unable, for whatever reason, to fill positions in the skilled trades or in the clerical work of the country. The majority of the poor whites are of this class, but you find similar people in all countries. Here they would have found their natural place in industry, commerce, etc. had it not been for the native. The result, however, is serious; but we have an army of white unskilled unemployed, the number of

whom is growing daily, and something should be done to deal with this difficulty.

There are two things which must be carried on simultaneously. These are, to increase the earning capacity of the poor white and to increase his pay accordingly. To do this however you must take him in hand while he is still young. The task is no easy one, but it is by no means insuperable.

The wages of the unskilled labourer should ultimately be high enough to permit the man to live decently and to give his children a chance in life. Up to the present white men have left the unskilled work to the native because the wage is not enough to live upon. That can be altered with higher wages and higher efficiency; and if young men could be induced to take up this class of work, we would soon have in this country a class of skilled unskilled workers, who could earn a wage high enough to live upon. In Europe, Australia and America, the unskilled worker's wage averages from 50 per cent to 80 per cent of the skilled man's wage; in South Africa it ranges from 10 percent to 20 per cent, and some effort is due to correct this disparity. I realize that it is not an easy matter but we should try to deal with the problem.

Many large undertakings have been tried in the interests of these people, but, I understand, with little success, and the problem is becoming more pressing as time goes on. It is therefore necessary that the nation should look the problem squarely in the face, take its courage in both hands and tackle it. It may mean sacrifice - it probably will.\* Much money is being expended every year but the trouble grows and we are literally compelled to find avenues of employment for the unskilled whites.

To this end I would suggest the following:

That an Act of Parliament be passed compelling all employers of unskilled labour to include in such labour a certain percentage of white unskilled labour, the percentage to be determined after investigation of the capability of the industry to absorb them.

Certain industries could take more of this kind of labour than others. For instance, the Building industry in the Cape Peninsula could take at least 5 per cent. while this would not be too large a percentage for mining, but all industries could take some, and without loss to the industry.

SENATOR ROBERTS: Five per cent of the total number employed?-- Yes.

I must make it clear that I am not forcing the poor whites on industry in large numbers at once, but rather by a gradual process, and chiefly from the younger section generation as they can be trained and absorbed.

The unskilled workers in other countries commence work when they are 14 to 16 years of age. Here they must go to school until they are 16; after this age they should at once be put to the work which is to be their life occupation.

What would you do with the natives; can you leave that important part of the problem alone?-- No.

Well, what would you do with the natives whom you must exclude if you put in 5 per cent of poor whites, these would not be additional would they?-- Yes, out of every 100 labourers you would employ 5 per cent white men. That is to absorb the big army that is always growing

growing, this unemployed white population.

And so is the native population growing, and their demands for work, what would you do with them?-- Well, they are finding employment to-day. The native is displacing the Cape coloured man in the unskilled work.

But are you not transferring the problem from the poor white to the poor black?-- No, not if you employ only 5 per cent of the whites.

But you must then exclude 5 per cent of the blacks?-- I suppose that would be so but you must do something for the whites also.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would not that mean mixing up in the same jobs whites and blacks in a way that people hitherto have been opposed to?-- Yes, but you see if you only include 5 per cent you may be able to find billets for them where they won't be actually rubbing shoulders, using pick and shovel all the time, with the native. A certain amount probably will. But the difficulty to-day is this. A man is in the country and grows to manhood; he probably has a wife and family and finds it impossible to live there so he removed to the town. Now, when he comes to a town - we have had them in our employment - these people get quite a different outlook. They do not fit into the scheme. I can quite understand that if we had had these same men as boys and trained them in the sort of work that we have in our business, they would fit in very well. In that way we could absorb quite a considerable number of poor whites.

MR. LUCAS: Is this all on the assumption of a minimum wage?-- Yes, you must fix a wage that will keep a man alive.

MAJOR ANDERSON: Would you have the same minimum wage for black and white?-- Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: You do not visualise their actually rubbing shoulders I take it in the majority of cases?—Not wholly; I think if they are going to do all the unskilled work then it would probably be the same as happened in Kimberley. The Government have got in their contract that all unskilled labour on public works buildings shall be done at the rate of 1/- a hour. Now, in Kimberley where there is a large number of these poor whites, the builder did the whole of his <sup>labouring</sup> building work with these poor whites and said that they gave very satisfactory results. In Cape Town the same stipulation obtained but the result is that it is all done by Kafirs, natives.

In the building trade?— Yes.

And coloured men also?— A few coloured men but chiefly natives.

MAJOR ANDERSON: At the same rate?— Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: But as there is not the same poor white population it would not work here as in Kimberley?— No. I think that is the reason we have not here taken on whites to do the work.

Simply because they are not available?— There are not available, and in a centre like this, you have quite a number of unemployables too.

MAJOR ANDERSON: But are not poor whites brought from other parts of the country to take on work of that sort, or they not likely to be, if it is not at present being done?— Yes, once you bring about a definite class of people who do unskilled work at a rate of pay which will enable a man to bring up a family, I should not be surprised to find some works done by exclusively white, because there would be enough in the job to maintain his wife and family and his home. And I think that is very necessary. You have had it in other countries, a class

of

of people who do the labouring work. I do not see why we should have the poor white problem to the extent we have

DR. ROBERTS: Is it not due to the climate to a great extent?-- Possible. Of course we know how the poor white came into being and that has not assisted him to find work <sup>urban</sup> in ~~the~~ areas but he is driven to it now to such an extent that he has got to come.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you think we have as large a proportion of poor whites as other countries have?-- I do not know how to answer that exactly but I do feel that nearly everybody in the white countries would be able to do a job and there would be a job for them. They would be qualified for a certain job and there would be a certain amount of work for them. Now with the poor white there does not seem to be anything for him to do.

Have you considered that between 60 and 70 per cent of the population here - I am referring to the native population - are as yet only fit for unskilled work? You do not have any parallel in white countries; does not that exclude the man who wants more money and can only make his living as an unskilled labourer, automatically from the job?-- Well we have left the unskilled work to the natives.

But we have such a large proportion of the total population of the country who can only do that kind of work?-- Yes and you have also a large section of the white population who are not able to do anything else.

But every country has that?-- Yes, but that is their job in life. We should try to find something for him to do. Look at the Cape coloured man; he is already a big burden to the State and he may become a bigger burden still as the population increases.

It must be a matter of Government policy to find employment; their difficulties are due to the peculiar racial position of the population ?-- Yes, in other countries if they are not able to do clerical work and so on, they do labourers work and fall into a niche but here they have no niche to fall into because the natives take their place. So we have to put up the native to enable him to live and the native will have to qualify to fill the positions open to him.

MAJOR ANDERSON: Do you think it is possible to do anything in the direction you are suggesting unless you put unskilled work on a minimum wage basis irrespective of colour?-- Yes, I have suggested that.

That is a fundamental?-- Yes, you cannot differentiate between the two. As soon as you do that you are really penalising the man you are trying to help. Supposing you had a white and a coloured man both wanting a job; if the white man wanted 10/- and the other 5/- then the white man would not get the job.

Do you think it is feasible within a reasonable time to carry out such a scheme as you have suggested?-- It would have to be gradual. We could certainly pay a little more than we are paying at present and I think by gradually increasing it I think we could eventually bring it up to a living wage.

Would you be prepared to have 27/6 a week for application all over the country?-- No, I am only talking for the Cape Peninsula. So far as the Cape Peninsula is concerned I would certainly recommend that that be the wage here. I do not know that that would be suitable for the whole of South Africa. I think you would have to take each place on its merits.

THE CHAIRMAN: There is a certain mobility; what is done  
here



here would have its repercussions?— Yes, but under the Industrial Conciliation Act we have got power to review wages and working conditions and although we have got a National Council we have varying rates in the different centres. Our wages in Cape Town are 7d. less an hour than in Johannesburg for instance, so if there was the necessary machinery put up to fix wages for these people you could have one wage in Cape Town and another in the North.

But what I was thinking was the fact that people looking for work will stream to the places where there is a higher rate of wages?— Yes, that is what I suggested earlier, that there should be means of controlling the movements of these people through the Labour Bureau.

MR. LUCAS: Is not the question of the mobility of labourers very much exaggerated?— Take the position as it is to-day in Cape Town which has a much higher unskilled labourers wage than Johannesburg. Port Elizabeth is a little lower than Cape Town but higher than Durban or Johannesburg, but you do not get leaving the lower paid centres in large numbers?— No, a man has got to consider the expense apart from the slight increase in wages. Even a tradesman who is earning £6 or £7 a week is averse to moving from one place to another because he has to break up his home to start with and will have to <sup>build</sup> start up another, and so people do not move about for small increases of wages.

THE CHAIRMAN: But native labour is more mobile than labour generally (instancing cases of natives coming from various parts of Africa) There is plenty of mobility in that?— Yes. There is of course a certain amount of mobility about it.

A lot of the labourers in Cape Town for instance come from the Transkei?— Yes.

The wage for unskilled is much higher <sup>here</sup> than the wage for

for unskilled in Johannesburg?-- Yes.

But you still get an influx into both districts?-- Yes, they do not come here in overwhelming numbers. One would think that they would all come here and not go to Johannesburg.

DR. ROBERTS: But the native has a certain liking for a place; from one district a man will go to Johannesburg and from another district he will go to Kimberley. It becomes a tradition?-- Yes.

Major ANDERSON: Don't you think that mobility may decrease as the natives become more educated?-- Yes. At present it is largely ignorance or lack of inside information which controls it.

THE CHAIRMAN: In regard to the question of a legal minimum wage irrespective of race we have to look at our problem in the first instance from the effect it has on the native; would you not think that an innovation of that sort is likely to react adversely on the employment of natives?-- It would not in Cape Town. We have our rate of 27/6 now. That scale is not fixed in the interests of the native, it was fixed in the interests of the coloured man but the result is that the native has displaced the coloured man when he draws the same pay.

Owing to his better physique?-- Yes, I cited a case on Government work where the rate was 1/- a hour. That was obviously intended for white men but the result has been that the native has had it all with the exception of a few coloured men and less still white men. That applies to our firm and to most builders; you can go down Parliament Street now where there is a big Government building going up, and you will not find many white men there.

MAJOR ANDERSON: Is that deliberate or is it due to the absence of available white men?-- I think if there were white

white men available and willing to do the work they would get the preference.

MR. LUCAS: Take the trade you are referring to and excluding Government contracts have the employers as a whole observed ~~the rate of 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> an hour~~ the rate of 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub><sup>d</sup> an hour?— No I am sorry to say they have not.

Contractors in other parts of the country are paying unskilled workers much lower wages?— Yes.

Do you know some of the wages that have been paid?— Yes, 3/- and 3/6 a day to the natives

Have natives been brought here to carry out contracts?— I think so.

Do you know whether the natives have been returned when the contracts were finished?— No, I think they were allowed to stay here.

So that every time anything of that sort happens, every time a contractor from outside Cape Town comes here with natives of that sort, you are really increasing your native population and leaving the natives brought down stranded?— Yes.

MAJOR ANDERSON: If that goes on instead of the natives here getting a higher rate of wages will they not be in competition with these natives who have been working for a lower wage?— Yes, we are rather nervous about that and that is why we would like a legal rate. As a matter of fact we have been trying to get a legal rate ~~from~~ <sup>through</sup> the Industrial Council Act and we have gone part of the way. We are distinctly in favour of a legal rate for unskilled labour - the whole of the master builders here.

MR. LUCAS: Can we take that as an expression of opinion of the master builders?— Yes.

Do you know far that would extend to other industries?—

I think it would be <sup>fairly</sup> general. I do not think anybody would want to pay less than 27/6.

MAJOR ANDERSON: I mean a fixed minimum wage to that effect, would you be in favour of it?-- ~~the~~ Difficulty always arises when there is not a legal rate of pay. One can take advantage of another and competition becomes unfair, and the wage gradually works down. But if we all had to pay 27/6 which is certainly not too much to pay when you compare the price of unskilled labour in other countries, it would be an advantage all round.

MR. LUCAS: Your idea was that once it was fixed it would be part of your policy at intervals to raise it until you got to your living wage?-- Yes; certainly I think the workers should be given a chance to live decently and give his children a chance.

Do you think there would be any opposition on the part of employers generally?-- Employers always oppose increases in wages. That is a failing of theirs. I do not think that we should be guided entirely by that. I think we ought to do all we can to see that the people who have got to do the work should at least be able to live decently on what they earn.

You think the interests of the community must over-ride the wishes of the employers where necessary?-- Yes, within reason of course.

MAJOR ANDERSON: That applies of course to unskilled wages?-- I am not taking the skilled wages. The skilled workers are able to look after themselves and they have got provisions under the Industrial Conciliation Act; they can do their own bargaining and fix their own rates.

MR. LUCAS: Have you any views to express about the formation of trades unions to which natives are admitted?--

There

There are a few here but I do not know much about that.

But they are prohibited from forming unions in other parts of the Union?— Yes, that is why they cannot do it under the Conciliation Act, because they are pass-bearing natives.

You made the statement that the number of poor whites is growing daily: I wonder what sort of evidence you can adduce for that?— Well, I do not know that I have got anything in the way of reliable figures. I understand that there is quite a large number of these people coming into certain areas round about Woodstock, Salt River, Observatory and places like that. You find much larger numbers of people with Dutch names than was a case a few years ago.

Is it the fact that the number of Dutch names is on the increase that influenced you to think that there is a growth in the number of poor whites?— And applications for work. There are many more applications from that class of persons to-day that was the case some years ago.

I presume a certain number of them get work?— Yes.

We have had evidence that the number of poor whites in the sense of people who are poor because they won't work is decreasing, that they are prepared to go to work now?— I do not suggest that they are poor because they won't work.

Do you mean that these people were poor in spite of the fact that they were working?— Yes; well, of course when I was speaking about the poor white I was rather referring to the man in the country and these people have certainly come into the town, if one can rely upon what one hears.

You mean that Cape Town is getting a bigger proportion than it got before?— I think so.

You do not necessarily mean that there is a larger number

in the Union?— Well, I understand that the number is growing all over the country.

I know that that statement is frequently made and I am trying to find out whether there is any reason for it because my own observation is rather the other way?— I am glad to hear that there is that view because certainly the general feeling is that the number of poor whites is growing all over the country.

But you have no evidence except that that is the feeling of people in general?— No.

With regard to Langa we have not had evidence from the City Council yet but I understand that the rents are very heavily subsidised there; can you express a view as to whether that is correct or not, without going into details?— Subsidised in what way?

That the income is by no means adequate to cover the expenditure on the place?— Well, the rents at Langa as I suggested in my evidence is something which is capable of adjustment. I think that some of the rents, based on the cost of building would appear to me to be too low, whilst other rents also based on the cost of the building would appear to be too high.

But on the average does the City Council make ends meet between income and expenditure?— No.

So a certain amount of money must come from the general rates?— Yes.

Have not demands been laid before you to do the same thing for the coloured people that you are doing there for the natives, that is, to give them housing?— At sub economic rates, yes. I do not know that the demand has been put up to us, but we have formed a company known as the Citizens' Housing League Utility Co. From a dozen to twenty prominent citizens of Cape Town have formed this company and we are

are actually building houses for this class of person with the sub-economic money that we got from the Government.

Is that for coloured people?— Coloured and whites.

From that money that you got from the Government?— Yes, through the Municipality.

Relying purely on the lower rate of interest?— Yes, we are responsible to them for 3 per cent on this money and then we can reduce the rents because of getting this money at that low rate of interest.

And you have no other means that this one in the case of coloured and white housing?— No I don't know of any other means.

Durban for instance has its beer?— Yes.

You have nothing of that kind?— No.

Have you considered the question whether the policy of giving sub-economic housing at the expense of the rates is one which can be recommended?— It is not one I would recommend. I would rather recommend increasing the wages of the people so that they can pay an economic rent.

Is there not also another cause for the high rentals that have to be charged, namely the fact that the buildings have been put up entirely by European labour?— Yes, there is something in that. You know the Bloemfontein scheme of housing no doubt. There the native can do it if he is building a house for a native. The Industrial Council of the Building Industry are quite in agreement with that but they object to the Municipality entering into a contract for a large scheme such as the buildings at Langa because it is not desirable in a £100,000 or £150,000 scheme to employ semi-skilled men and natives and people of that kind. I think that they are not altogether wrong there because you can imagine that there might be an awful muddle and the result might be an awful lot of buildings

buildings, and it would be a big risk in a scheme like that. No one should take responsibility in a scheme like that except a competent builder.

It is not a question of whom the contract should be given to, but which labour should be employed on the contract. Here in the Cape Peninsula you have non-European labour, that is to say the ordinary building labour for houses that will be occupied by Europeans but when it comes to building a big township like Langa European labour is employed at higher rates of wages?— No, that is a wrong impression.

Was Cape coloured labour used?— Yes. You can use them anywhere. You can use them on Government buildings. ~~Yes~~ When the scale of pay for the skilled man was laid down and the coloured did not come into the question at all. You could have had natives there if you had paid them the rate of pay for the skilled workman.

But in actual practice, I think somebody told us, the workmen were almost exclusively European?— The same scale of pay is laid down by the Industrial Council of the Building Industry. For work of that kind you must have skilled men and you must pay the rate of pay applicable to skilled men. The same Council operated in Bloemfontein and there if a native wants a house he can employ a native to build it for him. The same could have been done here but it was considered in the interests of the industry it would be unwise to allow some incompetent person to have a contract running into £150,000 ~~and~~ build houses for the natives even if it was for the Municipality.

MR. LUCAS: It is a question of risk when working on a large scale like that for an employer like the Municipality? Is that where the difficulty comes?— In a big contract of that kind you would require hundreds of skilled men, but in building a cottage for a native probably one skilled man would suffice.



And a man who has quite sufficient skill to organise the building of a small house may not be at all aboe to organise the carrying through of a scheme such as a £100,000 scheme?— That is so.

MAJOR ANDERSON: And the net result is that you have got houses built at a cost that the natives under present conditions cannot meet in regard to rent?— Yes, that is so.

You cannot get away from that?— No.

SENATOR VAN NIEKERK: Can you tell us what the ordinary coloured man intown has to pay compared with the rents charged at Langa?— He has got to pay more.

MR. MOSTERT: How much more has the coloured man to pay?— I was speaking to a lift man the other day and he said he had to pay 22/6<sup>a week</sup> for two rooms, and a kitchen. That is in District 6. At Langa the native pays 15/- a month for two rooms.

DR. ROBERTS: Does that also obtain with regard to European houses in town?— Yes, the rents are very high.

MAJOR ANDERSON: Do you think it would have been better if Langa had been built on the Bloemfontein system, would it have met the difficulty?— In some ways, yes, and in other ways, no. I think that Langa will ultimately be the show township of South Africa. I do not see why it should not be. I think that the Municipality have had to charge these higher rents because the buildings were built at an expensive time. I am sure they could get the same accommodation now for perhaps 50 per cent of the cost that they then paid.

MR. MOSTERT: Did you say 50 per cent?— Yes, by some slight alterations in the design and materials, but still habitable houses.

Has building gone down to that extent?— Not quite to that extent but to a very considerable extent. It has gone down quite a big lot.

Have your journeymen's wages gone down?— No. The cost of material has gone down

DR. ROBERTS: Did not the Health Board interfere in a way which caused a considerable ~~an~~ increase of cost?— Well, it need not be detrimental to the cost now. I have gone into that a little bit, not much, I am on the Native Affairs Committee of the Municipality - I am only a new member of the Municipality - and I have taken an interest in that. I have already enquired into it and I am quite satisfied that a very substantial saving could be effected in the cost and also in the rents and ultimately Langa could be a success. I am quite satisfied it can be made a success.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you mean economic?— Yes.

You are over-capitalised to start with?— Yes.

How are you going to get over that??— You will have to cut your first loss.

And do you suggest that in future you could build at economic rates?— Well, we can build a lot cheaper than we have built in the past. I am quite satisfied in regard to that. A great deal could be done to reduce the rents of the future buildings at Langa/<sup>and</sup>in that way I believe we could make the whole scheme pay.

When you say you could build cheaper do you mean that you could get the same buildings at a cheaper rate?— Yes, and alter the buildings so as to effect economy.

Getting the buildings at a cheaper rate; is that purely to the fall in prices?— It is due in the first place to the fall in prices of materials, and secondly because of keener competition. Competition would count for several points per cent in the reduction of the cost.

Dr. ROBERTS: Would you not add to that a third, there would be no interference by the Health Department?xxx Did not that

that interference at the beginning, interference with the style of the houses add considerably to the cost?-- It may have done. I do not know to what extent they interfered.

A good deal?-- There are little things which I think need a little adjustment; I think they are all capable of adjustment.

MR. MOSTERT: When you say it is possible to build 50 per cent cheaper do you mean houses with the same room space?-- Yes.

What would that reduce the rents to more or less; it is 15/- now?-- I do not know what the rents could be reduced in the circumstances.

What are the ground values there?-- Ground values are cheap.

On the area that they occupy?-- I do not know what area each house has. They build them in rows and fence them off.

It does not look more than one-fifteenth of an acre?-- I should not think so, no.

And so the ground value of a plot is very low?-- Yes.

What would you put it down at?-- I should say between £5 and £10.

£45 an acre?-- I should not think that would be any too much.

So the actual ground value would not mean very much?-- It was a grant by the Government to the Municipality in the first place.

Still, in looking into all these things there is such a thing as ground value, although you get it for nothing?-- Yes.

MR. LUCAS: There is another point which will have to be considered, the size of the house, do you consider these houses at Langa are suitable say for a man his wife and four children?-- No, I think they are rather small. The houses

at Bloemfontein contained three and four rooms and the material for those houses cost, I think they said, £50 or £60 and the labour, if he hires it, will cost a little over £105 altogether

Do you agree that that is one of the advantages of the Bloemfontein system, that you could have a larger house for less money?-- Yes, but I still think that we ought to build better houses here and keep up the standard at Langa.

MAJOR ANDERSON: Have you seen some of the locations in other parts of the country?-- I have seen Johannesburg. There was a big lot of buildings being built when I was in Johannesburg some years ago in the Western Township; there they were building a big room and a kitchen; a living room and two bed-rooms for £90 They have since built houses with a divided room for £113. These houses have no floors or ceilings and have iron roofs.

Mr. LUCAS: Can you give us any information about the origin of the influx of natives into Cape Town when they came here originally?-- I think they were driven here by force of circumstances. I think the same thing very largely applies here to-day. When a native gets into difficulties in his home he begins looking round to see where he can go, and he usually makes for the urban areas.

Then you would expect to have a string of natives between here and the Transkei whereas in fact there are big gaps where there are no natives?-- I cannot explain that.

I have been told that one of the most unsatisfactory states of affairs which exists just outside the municipal area where there are lawless natives remaining, is due to the 14 days rule, 7 days to get work, and 7 days/<sup>renewal</sup> after which if they fail to get work they have to go?-- I think that is quite likely. There is not a great deal of work and I can quite understand that a native is not likely always to get a job within 14 days. Of

Of course there are other natives I understand who are living in these areas who simply won't obey laws and be amenable to rules and regulations, and so they go outside where they can be free lances.

You yourself I understand employ natives for unskilled work?- Yes.

Is that universal in the building trade in Cape Town?- Very largely.

Would you say that the native largely predominates over coloured in respect of unskilled work?- Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Since how long is it that the native has pushed out the coloured man from unskilled work?- I think within the last 15 years, gradually.

Fifteen years ago it must have been very slight?- Yes.

But since when were the majority of unskilled men natives?-- I think certainly for the last ten years.

Do you think the change came as quickly as that?- Yes.

When the native came he squeezed out the native in five years?-- I should think so.

Mr. LUCAS: Was that due to the native coming in voluntarily or outside contractors getting contracts and bringing natives with them?- I do not know. In 1910 I went to Johannesburg and then I came back after being away between five and six years, and I found the natives here in larger numbers than they were when I went away.

But you do not know how they came?- No.

How do you get native employees when you want them, do they apply to you or is there a labour exchange?- No, they just come; if you have a job they come forward.

How do they get to know?- It is wonderful how they do get to know.

Do you think friends pass on the word?- I suppose so. They come in tremendous numbers.

In building is there any opening for natives other than

than this unskilled work?- No.

Are there any natives acting as foraman or sub-foreman over other workers?-- You get occasionally boss boys but they are very few in numbers. That is my experience.

MR. MOSTERT: Are there a large number of natives unemployed to-day?- Very large.

DR. ROBERTS: You could not perhaps venture an estimate of the number?- No, I could not do that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your evidence.

JOSIAH McOMBRING. examined:

THE CHAIRMAN : You are President of the African Aboriginal Association?— Yes.

When was this Association founded?— As recently as three months ago.

And the membership, is that natives only?— Yes, not coloured.

Will you tell us what you wish to say about the Masters and Servants Act?— I would first like to ask the Commission whether I should speak in Afrikaans or state my case in English.

You speak English very well...?— Well with reference to the Masters and Servants Amendment Bill before the House, the Bill in its principles may have very good intentions — but we as natives find that the Bill is certain to bring a certain amount of hardship amongst us. There are certain clauses I refer to but not having the Bill before me I shall not be able to go into beyond giving perhaps the wording of the clauses. There is one which provides that the master can give lashes to the extent of five.

DR. ROBERTS: No, I think you are referring to the clause which says "The Court may"?— Oh! the Court may decide?

The reason being to prevent the master giving lashes?— Well whichever way it is we feel that the Bill is certainly going to give powers to the master which we as natives have always looked upon should be left to the Courts; we feel that a power of that description only falls under the jurisdiction of the law courts .

SENATOR VAN NIEKERK: This does, will you therefore be satisfied?— Yes, but when lashes have to be administered for petty crimes? For instance the servant is let off by the Court. What is the reason that lashes are now to be administered for

for petty crimes? We would be satisfied if we were put under the impression that lashes were only to be administered in the case of hardened criminals. We do not know how we have got to understand the whiteman's way of legislating when it comes to a subject race. We are at a loss to understand as to whether we have given provocation or not, that these powers, or rather that this particular amendment should be brought about. We feel that we have not given provocation and therefore we think that the Minister of Justice should seek native opinion. We could perhaps recommend to the Minister a system, or rather make a suggestion, which would bring about a modified amendment so as to meet the case, say, of the farmer.

THE CHAIRMAN: Can you suggest an amendment?— I have not given it very serious thought but since you put the question I have a suggestion to make. If the amendment does not purport as one to force the native only to become a labourer and nothing else but a labourer, then the suggestion is that the Natives Land Act of 1913 be made to give the native an opportunity, since he is a peasant race, to rise economically or in other words, to encourage him in the sphere of life for which he is the best suited and for which he has a very strong inclination.

The Commission is well aware that the natives biggest cry in this country is more land and by getting more land he feels that he will be able to contribute his fair share and become a more contented citizen than he is at present. I think if the Minister had to consider an amendment in that form it would certainly meet with the approval in my opinion of the vast majority of European opinion as well as the vast majority of native opinion in this country

SENATOR VAN NIEZKE: But you are getting away from the point. The question you raised in connection with that Bill

was



was this, that if a native deserts his master he can be hauled before the Court and the magistrate can impose a fine or a whipping, and he can also impose both; now I assume that what the Chairman is driving at, is what what do you suggest should be imposed instead of a whipping?-- The Masters and Servants Act in itself I think has made ample provision for cases of that nature.

If the Bill had to be so amended that the punishment, the caning, should be applied only to minors, that is to boys who contravene the Masters and Servants Act, do you think that would be fair? I mean instead of sending a youngster who runs away from a farm and does not want to do his work at home, <sup>to gaol,</sup> the Magistrate could impose a whipping upon him, would not that be preferable to sending him to gaol? - With regard to that question, we feel that we have outlived corporal punishment.

That is for a minor?-- Yes, but it should not be in the case of petty crime and this is a question of petty crime. We feel that we have outlived that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do not natives sometimes give a whipping to their children?-- Every father does.

So you do not think you have outlived it in that sense, but only as far as legal punishment is concerned?-- Yes.

You want to have the right to do it yourselves but the law must not do it?-- Not in a case of petty crime.

There is still the choice in the case of a native running away, of putting him in prison ~~or~~ which would be preferable?-- I would say that if the crime for having deserted his master demands that he be sent to gaol, then I would sooner have this ~~that~~; I would say it would have been better if a compromise could be arrived at between the master and the parent or guardian