

LMN/005/0004/3

06/76

SOUTH AFRICAN CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS

MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN  
CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS TO THE 61ST SESSION OF  
THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION  
HELD IN GENEVA, JUNE 1976

LONDON 1976

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MEMORANDUM TO THE 1976 CONFERENCE OF THE ILO

It is now twelve years since the ILO published its Declaration on Apartheid and Programme for the Elimination of Apartheid in 1964; at the same time it invited its Director-General to follow the labour situation in South Africa and to submit every year for consideration by the Conference, a report on the application of the Declaration including any necessary recommendations concerning measures aimed at bringing an end to the policy of apartheid in the Republic of South Africa.

The Declaration on Apartheid of 1964

The practical measures set forth by the ILO Declaration for the elimination of apartheid in labour matters in South Africa referred to the following three main areas: equality of opportunity in respect of admission to employment and training; freedom from forced labour (including practices which involve or may involve an element of co-ercion to labour); and freedom of association and the right to organise. In respect of each of these fields the Programme set out, primarily in the form of an analysis of the applicable laws and regulations, the situation as it existed in 1964, summarised the findings concerning this situation which had been made by authoritative ILO bodies and made recommendations for the amendment of the laws of South Africa so as to eliminate apartheid.

Why South Africa Withdrew from the ILO

South Africa withdrew from the ILO after refusing to implement the measures proposed in the Declaration. It may be useful to recall the events leading up to South Africa's withdrawal.

At the 1961 conference, it was resolved, by 163 votes to nil, with 89 abstentions, to call upon South Africa to withdraw from the ILO. When asked to report on the position of law and practice in South Africa in regard to ILO Convention III, Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), the South African replied with an involved defence of apartheid.

The Governing Body of the ILO then, at a meeting on June 27 - 29, 1963, adopted three resolutions on South Africa. The first excluded South Africa from all ILO committees; the second provided for consultations between the Director-General of the ILO and the Secretary-General of the United Nations to seek a solution to the problems arising from South Africa's continued membership; and the third stated that consideration should be given to amending the ILO Constitution to give effect to the 1961 conference decision.

From this followed a recommendation by the Governing Body that South Africa be presented with an ultimatum to live up to her obligations under the ILO Constitution or be suspended. The South African government anticipated the 1964 conference decision on this recommendation by announcing its withdrawal from the ILO. The Minister of Labour stated in Parliament on March 11, 1964, that South Africa was leaving because of "an accumulation of hostile acts".

The "hostile acts" on the part of the ILO, referred to by the Minister of Labour, were the series of resolutions and ultimatum charging South Africa with persistently and flagrantly violating the principle of equal opportunities for all human beings regardless of race, by means of various legislative acts incompatible with the fundamental rights of man. (These resolutions and demands were to be summarised in the ILO Declaration of 8 July 1964).



### The 1973 Special Report

In his 1973 Special Report, the Director-General gave a picture of the repressive legislation affecting civil liberties in South Africa and drew attention to the international dimensions of the policy of apartheid. In that same year, 1973, the International Trade Union Conference against Apartheid was held during the ILO Conference, and resolutions aiming at the elimination of the policy of apartheid in South Africa were unanimously adopted.

### The 1975 Recommendations

Last year, in 1975, in pursuance of the decision of 1964, the Director-General's report recommended the following:

"In the light of the situation described in the present report, there appear to be four main problems on which action should be taken as a matter of priority:

1. The repeal of the repressive provisions of the laws and regulations governing the entry, residence and employment of Africans in the urban areas (the "pass Laws") and the progressive elimination of the migratory labour system;
2. The granting of full trade union and collective bargaining rights to African workers, in particular by amending the definition of "employee" contained in the Industrial Conciliation Act, 1956, so as to include African workers;
3. The removal of statutory and other restrictions on the occupational advancement of Africans (job reservation and the industrial colour bar), as regards both employment and access to vocational training and apprenticeship;
4. The elimination of wage disparities based on race and sex".

(International Labour Conference, 11th Special Report of 1975 of the Director-General on the Application of the Declaration concerning the Policy of Apartheid in the Republic of South Africa, page 50).

### Affiliation

In considering the implementation of these four goals, the question which is foremost at the present time is whether or not African Trade Unions should affiliate to the white Trade Union Federations. This question, of affiliation or non-affiliation, can be considered only in relation to the broader struggle for political rights.

The Trade Union movement represents the interests of the workers, while other groups are represented by other types of organisations, throughout the world. This representation is linked with the status of the individual in society. The usually accepted principles of Trade Unionism are to accept the workers as they are in the society in question and to unite them to improve their living and working conditions.



However, in the Republic of South Africa, African people have an inferior status defined by law and enforced by decree; so inferior, that African Trade Unionism in South Africa cannot limit itself to the bread and butter policies which may be appropriate elsewhere. There is a strict limit to the usefulness of negotiation when African workers have technically no legal right to negotiate and no representatives in government who could obtain such a right for them. For that reason, for the African Trade Unions to **accept affiliation** on behalf of their members to white Trade Unions or Federations, is meaningless. Such an acceptance would be consistent with the policy of white supremacy, since it would accentuate the white dominance prevailing in the Trade Union movement at present.

The Africans in South Africa have no representation in parliament nor the right to vote or to join or form a trade union of their choice. They cannot directly negotiate with their employers, neither are they entitled to live or work where they please. In addition they are subjected to low wages based on colour and to the migrant labour system, which imposes restrictions on their movements.

All these factors accentuate the conditions under which African trade unions are forced to operate in South Africa. Hence affiliation to a white Trade Union Federation would consolidate and tighten the screw of apartheid for the black people of South Africa.

Over the past twelve years moves towards such affiliations have been made from time to time. In practice however, it has been found that the white federations were unable to maintain consistently a policy of allowing African Trade Unions to affiliate. From time to time progressive decisions to admit African unions were taken, only to be reversed, retaken and reversed once again. This was counter productive for the African Trade Unions which could have no confidence in these decisions even if they had been genuine. Another problem which arose was that the white Trade Union Federations were in practice unable to bring about co-operation by their white member unions with black affiliated unions at shop floor level, in spite of the full formal relationship which did from time to time exist at executive level.

How can the African worker hope to attain the status of equality by handing over his Trade Union organisation to co-ordinating bodies in which policy is determined by the very minority group whose superior status keeps the African worker inferior?

Over decades the demands of the African worker for higher wages, better conditions and skilled work have been continually frustrated not only by the apartheid system but also by the organised white workers.

### Labour Struggle is Political Struggle

As far back as 1956, at the foundation of the South African Congress of Trade Unions, we stated that the organising of the mass of the workers for higher wages, better conditions of life and labour was inextricably bound up with a determined struggle for political rights and liberation from all oppressive laws and practices. It followed that a mere struggle for the economic rights of the workers without participation in the general struggle for political emancipation would condemn the interests of the workers.



The twenty years that have passed since that statement have fully demonstrated the correctness of our analysis. While the apartheid regime talks of "detente" and "separate development" it banishes, imprisons, tortures and murders our people. While foreign companies amass millions in profit for apartheid, our people continue to be arrested under the pass laws, are denied the right to work where they wish, and kept in ignorance and starvation.

What is at stake for the African working class in South Africa is not merely the issue of trade union rights, the "bread and butter" policies which we are constantly advised, both inside and outside the country, to strive for these are unattainable without adopting the issues of political rights, of full and complete democracy, of equal rights and the absence of privileges for any group. This is the basis, and the only basis for the solution of the national question in our country and for the full development of our great working class.

### Detentions

The years 1974 and 1975 have witnessed a mass of detentions among all sections of the population in South Africa. Every single person who has endeavoured to oppose the system of apartheid has tasted to some degree the aggression of the police state.

Facts and figures do not fully reflect the feelings of those who suffer under detention. The document on "Detention and Detente in Southern Africa" published by the Christian Institute (30 April 1976) states:

An estimated 61.8 years ( $\pm$  22,566 days) have been "borrowed" by the Government of South Africa from 217 people since the beginning of 1974. No compensation is given, no explanation offered, and no guarantee that the State will not "take" more of their time during the years which lie ahead.

These figures are in fact an underestimate of the number of people hustled off into indefinite incommunicado detention, without protection of the courts, without legal advice, without at that stage being charged with any crime - at the mercy of the South African Security Police. Of those 217 people only 39 are known to have been charged under the Terrorism Act and 7 under the Suppression of Communism Act. The overwhelming majority of the "victims" are from the black community and more particularly from the various black groupings and organisations within South Africa who are increasingly voicing the true grievances and aspirations of their people. Too long has the white minority Government of South Africa claimed the right to speak for the Black Community.

Since the present Government came into power in 1948 it has introduced and enacted many laws to arrest and detain those who are opposed to the system of apartheid, communist and non-communist. The present government has banished those who opposed its policies and it has also banned the legitimate organisations which represented the interests of the people.



## The International Trade Union Protest

Since 1954, the International Trade Union Movement Centres, including the WFTU, ICFTU, and others have protested against the long series of brutal measures passed by the South African Government - measures which resulted in the arrest, detention and victimisation of workers who dared to oppose the system of apartheid.

The powers which the government has arrogated to itself over the past 28 years include the withdrawal and denial of passports without any reasons being given; indefinite detention without charge or reason; banning, banishment and house arrest, without reason stated; denial of information to the public; the closing down of newspapers; the denial of the right of habeas corpus; the power to decide where people shall live and where they may work; and the furthering of charges which would not be considered criminal in any other country.

Today the government, after having enacted this long series of ruthless repressive measures over the 28 years during which it has been in power, is now introducing yet another, the State Security ('SS') Bill.

What does the new 'SS' Bill mean?

Essentially, the Bill gathers together all pre-existing arbitrary power; extends them, and gives the Government the power to do to their opponents as they wish, unrestrained by what they seem to regard as the petty legalities which have up to now acted as some check upon them.

Arrests and detentions of workers and trade unionists, far from abating have intensified, and are still going on.

In the following sections this memorandum sets out in more detail what the policy of apartheid means for Africans.

### Medical Services

The doctor/patient ratio for the various population groups in South Africa is estimated as follows:

Whites	1 to about 400	Asians	1 to about 900
Coloureds	1 to 6000	Africans	1 to about 45,000

The tuberculosis rate for Africans is more than 15 times that of whites. A recent publication on the Bantustans (Divide and Rule by Barbara Rogers, published by the IDAF) states that reports of malnutrition among all sections of the population, but especially children, are becoming increasingly frequent. Between 75 and 80 per cent of the children examined at two hospitals in the Transkei were found to be suffering from malnutrition. Many of the children die or are permanently brain-damaged as a result. In another Bantustan, the Ciskei, it is claimed that about half of all the children are being stunted in their growth through malnutrition. In Kwa Zulu, yet another Bantustan, a study of malnutrition warns that it is changing the traditional Zulu physique - people are becoming small, stunted and mentally enfeebled.

### Education

In education, as in health, the policy of 'separate and unequal' applies. It was the architect of apartheid, Verwoerd, who in 1953 declared that one of the main purposes of the Bantu Education Act was to teach the Africans that "equality with Europeans is not for them". His successors today continue the tradition.



Whereas schooling is compulsory for all white children between the ages of 7 and 16, it is not for Africans. Almost 70 per cent of African children leave school by Standard Two and only 5 per cent reach Standard Six. Because of the shortage of classrooms, schools and teachers for Africans more than 1,000,000 African children are taught in double-session classes. While the State spends R457 per year on each White pupil, only R29 is spent on each African pupil. Whereas text books and stationery are free for white pupils, Coloured and Asians pupils, Africans must pay for their children's stationery and text books in all but the lowest classes and have to contribute to school funds.

The pupil-teacher ratio for whites is about 20:1. For Africans it is 60:1. At the level of university education whites outnumber Africans by 12 to 1 (95,589 to 7845), although the black/white population ratio is about 5:1.

### Employment

The difficulties in the way of educational advancement for Africans and other blacks are buttressed at shop-floor level by a mixture of statutory and extra-statutory restrictions on the free advancement of black labour. In spite of assurances by government and employers to the effect that "we are moving away from racial discrimination" the joint trade union-employer apprenticeship committees continue to exclude Blacks on various pretexts. Africans are totally denied apprenticeships except in the Bantustans and African townships. Coloureds and Asians are still excluded from many trades.

Faced with the need for greater supplies of skilled and semi-skilled labour to prevent the economy from stagnating, the white minority has settled on three main sets of mechanisms to filter Africans into jobs formerly closed to them, without under-mining the status of white workers. All three rest on the principle of cutting costs and paying Africans less for work that would otherwise be done by Whites.

The first method is simply to promote a white man and hire an African to do his job, usually changing the job name in the process. The second consists of the 'dilution' or 'fragmentation' of skilled jobs and re-definition of work processes in industrial agreements. This means, for example, that a job in which one white man previously performed a range of operations will be subdivided, with the white man retaining the most skilled (and best paid) part, while the less intricate parts are given to semi-skilled Africans at lower pay. The third mechanism is the creation of "border areas" near the Bantustans where industrialists are encouraged to move their plants. The incentive is the availability of an even greater reserve of cheap labour and the opportunity to pay even lower wages than in the urban areas.

### Wages

Wage differentials for African and white workers range from over 8:1 in the mining industry to just under 5:1 in manufacturing. It has been calculated that with an economic growth rate of 6 per cent a year it would require an absolute ceiling on white living standards to reduce the wage disparity to two to one by the year 2000. Even with a substantial fall in white wages, it would take until the year 2025 for white and black in South Africa to reach equal wages.

The following table shows the black:white wage ratio in the major industrial and service sectors:



STARVATION WAGES

CLASSIFICATION	YEAR	AVERAGE WHITE EARNINGS P.A.	AVERAGE AFRICAN EARNINGS P.A.	RATIO WHITE : AFRICAN	EARNINGS GAP P.A.
MINING & QUARRYING	1960	R2,312.91	R 148.35	15.59 : 1	R2,164.56
	1965	R2,909.34	R 176.50	16.48 : 1	R2,732.84
	1970	R4,253.36	R 215.55	19.73 : 1	R4,037.92
	1975	R7,793.00	R 957.08	8.14 : 1	R6,835.92
MANUFACTURING	1960	R2,021.95	R 371.27	5.45 : 1	R1,650.68
	1965	R2,695.09	R 507.62	5.31 : 1	R2,187.47
	1970	R3,816.54	R 660.26	5.78 : 1	R3,156.28
	1975	R5,880.97	R1218.63	4.83 : 1	R4,662.34
CONSTRUCTION	1960	R1,887.10	R 340.97	5.53 : 1	R1,546.13
	1965	R2,981.69	R 541.04	5.51 : 1	R2,440.65
	1970	R4,062.74	R 639.42	6.35 : 1	R3,423.32
	1975	R5,863.15	R1167.59	5.02 : 1	R4,695.56
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT	1960	R1,598.92	R 363.42	4.40 : 1	R1,235.50
	1965	R1,978.18	R 452.92	4.37 : 1	R1,525.26
	1970	R3,336.77	R 565.73	5.90 : 1	R2,771.04
	1975	R5,237.97	R1327.55	3.95 : 1	R3,910.42

Calculated from  
S.A. Bulletin of  
Statistics 1974/5



### Private Domestic Workers

X The question of domestic workers in private service, the majority of whom are women, deserves special attention. Many women workers are single heads of families, widowed, separated or unmarried supporting their own and relatives' children and numerous dependents. X Yet wages are calculated at starvation level for one person. A Budget published in the South African Race Relations News of March 1976 leaves blanks under headings such as medical, education, recreation and savings. More shocking still, it allows R8 a month - or less than R2 a week for food.

These women domestic workers constitute one of the most exploited groups in the South African economy.

### Unemployment

While unemployment is a general problem in South Africa, Africans are more acutely affected than other groups, because of the restrictions arising from the pass laws, removals and from their general employment conditions.

X Figures for African unemployment in South Africa are a very murky area, but the current Economic Development Programme estimates that in 1973 African unemployment stood at 366,000. The Financial Mail's own estimate is that by mid-1976 unemployment will stand at 550,000 people, increasing at a rate of 10,000 workers per month. No doubt this is an underestimate of the real situation, but even if accurate, it is a staggering figure. Figures of unemployed Africans are never published.

X At the present time in South Africa, Africans are suffering from two kinds of unemployment: residual unemployment and recessionary unemployment aggravated by job reservation.

The first is the perennial unemployment arising from the maintenance in rural areas of a pool of unskilled labour created by the system of pass laws and influx control. This is mainly chronic and seasonal unemployment. It has never ceased to exist since Africans were deprived of their land and other fundamental rights.

This pool of residual unemployment is now being swollen by the second type of unemployment, which is directly caused by the present economic recession.

X This recessionary unemployment is further aggravated by the policy of job reservation. Some of this recessionary unemployment arises from the policy by which Africans have been taken on in jobs on the condition that they were temporary, since these jobs 'belong' to whites in terms of the job reservation clause of the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1956. In times of recession these jobs revert to whites.

Unemployment is also aggravated by the inflow of immigrants from Western Europe. Some of these immigrants come to take away jobs which belong by right to the Black people of South Africa. The number of these immigrants is increasing every year; and some come to establish themselves in South Africa to defend the system of apartheid, wherever their interests are threatened.

### Pensions

Black workers are the main producers of the wealth of the country: yet, under the system of apartheid, they are the least cared for when they reach old age, at the time when they most need assistance. Black workers are the main contributors to the national wealth



both as productive workers and also because of their numerical buying power. The following figures will show the degree of discrimination suffered by black pensioners. The new monthly rates for civil pensions as from October 1st 1976 will be:

Whites	R72 per month
Coloureds	R38.50 per month
Blacks	R18 per month

The increases leading to these new rates were also discriminatory, the Whites having received the largest increase and the Blacks the smallest increase.

### Conclusions

We of the South African Congress of Trade Unions wish to make it clear to the world that South Africa has not changed from its policy of apartheid, despite dramatic changes over the past sixteen years which have altered the political map of Africa beyond recognition.

The continent has gained political independence, with the exception of the racist regimes in the South and a few remnants of colonialism in other regions.

The termination of colonial rule in Mozambique and Angola and the establishment of genuine people's rule in these two ex-colonies has acted as a tremendous psychological stimulus to the Blacks in Southern Africa. It has increased their demands for a real change to enable them to participate in the ruling of their country.

Faced with these demands the apartheid regime has reacted by pursuing its usual 'blood and smiles' strategy. On one hand it attempts to buy time for the continuation of its policies with false talk of 'detente' and offers of economic aid; on the other, it spends lavishly on the security and military apparatus and openly prepares for war.

In March 1975 the Vorster Government announced a military and security budget of nearly R1,196 million, double that of two years before and more than 23 per cent of the entire budget. The budget for this year provides for a further increase of 42 per cent in military expenditure.

The sharp rise in military allocations and the general preparations for military conflict inside the country and beyond its borders is accompanied internationally by a powerful propaganda campaign aimed at making the world believe that the racist regime is moving away from racial discrimination and is genuinely concerned with finding an avenue to peaceful change.

The facts of life in South Africa state otherwise. The apartheid juggernaut goes rolling on. During the years in which the present Government has been in power new laws, affecting every aspect of the lives of the oppressed majority have seen their way through the racist minority's Parliament.

While the apartheid regime spends lavishly on weapons of aggression and its police service, it continues to deny the majority of the people even the minimal standards of health, education, jobs and social care.



More than 1/2 million persons, almost 8% of the economically-active African population, continue to be arrested and prosecuted each year for "crimes" which apply to no other race group. Around 35,000 people are endorsed out of the urban areas each year and sent to the Bantustans. In 1973 alone, 92,000 people were endorsed out of cities under the pass laws. As part of this system a network of forced-labour camps, euphemistically styled "Rehabilitation Institutions" is to be established by the regime in collaboration with certain Bantustan leaders. These camps, according to the regime, will be used to re-educate pass-offenders in the tribal customs of their particular ethnic unit - customs which have long rubbed off in the process of industrialisation and proletarianisation of the African worker. Here we see the true face of apartheid. At a time when the issue of tribalism, which has been used so often in the past by colonial government to divide the African people, is under attack by progressive governments and forces all over Africa, the Vorster regime and its bantustans are working overtime to re-erect these very barriers to joint action by the black working-class.

In the previous pages we have shown how the people of South Africa and the world have reacted against apartheid. The International Labour Organisation itself as well as the main Trade Union movements which have for a long time participated in the discussion on the apartheid issue, have attempted to give guidelines to the South African government for the elimination of the policy of apartheid. The South African government has consistently continued with its racial policies. In education, in employment, residentially and in all other spheres it has continued to adopt methods not only of defense but of reinforcement of the apartheid system. The petty concessions they have made attempts to mask this intensification of apartheid. The racial discrimination and oppression which led the I.L.O. to take steps towards the expulsion of South Africa during the period 1961 to 1964 have never changed but have in fact become more acute. What is more shocking to the world is that despite the propaganda of detente the South African Government has increased its military allocation aimed at the defence of the apartheid system. Regrettably the international corporations and other governments continue to support the South African regime by supplying war materials and military knowhow. May we at this stage remind the international forums "lest they forget":

"It took a world war and the loss of 30 million lives to dispose of the Nazi menace - simply because those who had the power refused to use it in time to stop Nazism from overrunning Europe.

"Let us hope that the cost of ending apartheid will not be so great".

('Workers in Chains', SACTU 1976).

The time has now come for conference resolutions to become reality. We call upon the participations of the International Trade Union Conference against apartheid of 1973 to carry out the resolutions they then unanimously adopted.

John Gaetsewe  
General Secretary  
South African Congress of Trade Unions.



# SUPPLEMENT

Source: Financial Mail  
November 7, 1975.

