

wives of urban Natives, native farm workers, and Natives employed in the Reserves. A limited scheme for children's and dependants' allowances is also included, but the Committee records its opinion that the financial resources of the Union are not at present sufficient for adequate allowances covering all children. A detailed exposition of the scheme describes proposals for benefits to needy mothers of young children, recovery benefits to persons suffering from tuberculosis or leprosy, removal grants to persons directed to work away from their homes, and attendance allowances to old age and invalidity pensioners.

Basic rates of cash benefits are worked out, applicable respectively to Europeans, Asiatics and coloured persons, and Natives, in cities, towns, and rural areas. The rates payable to urban Natives are to be two-thirds of the coloured persons' benefit rates in cities and towns; rural Natives will receive benefits corresponding to the proposed rural rates for coloured persons and Asiatics.

Scheme B, applying to the bulk of the Native population, will provide benefits in cases of old age, blindness, and invalidity, payable partly in cash and partly in rations; maternity benefits to female employees in shops and factories, and recovery benefits in cases of tuberculosis and leprosy, will be maintained, but the relative rates of benefit will be placed on a uniform basis by applying the rural benefit rates applicable to such Natives as may join scheme A. The rates of benefit payable to farm Natives and Natives employed in the Reserves are to be the same as the proposed rural rates for coloured persons and Asiatics, i.e. old age and invalidity pensions of £18 per annum and dependants' allowance of not less than £6 per annum for a child.

The Committee points out that 'unemployment benefits are no substitute for a positive economic policy' and urges that the placement service already existing should be perfected and extended to Natives and that facilities for training should be provided. Finally, the Committee puts on record its conviction that 'in order that the general standard of living may be raised and benefit rates under the scheme lifted to a minimum needs basis, parallel action must be taken to increase the productivity of the Union's population'.

### *Conditions of Employment of Natives on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines*

THE Witwatersrand Mine Natives' Wages Commission was appointed in February 1943 to inquire into and report on 'the remuneration and conditions of employment for Natives on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines, with special reference to the economic requirements of such Natives . . . having due regard to provision made for them apart from wages; the effect of any modification of Native wage rates on the Mining Industry and the economic position of the country generally, and the effect of any such modification on the extent and conditions of employment of Europeans and non-Europeans in Gold Mining and other industries throughout the Union'.<sup>1</sup> The Report recently published by this Commission begins by pointing out the importance of the Gold Mining industry to the economy of the Union generally, while emphasizing the fact that the gold of the Witwatersrand is a wasting asset, that the number of persons employed in the industry will decrease, and that any increase or decrease of working costs will affect the capacity of the industry to offer employment. After a brief sketch of the organization of the industry, the Report goes on to consider the Native Labour Force of the Gold Mines. The methods of recruiting Native Labour are described and certain allegations made against the recruiting system are examined; the conclusions arrived at by the Commission are that there is no evidence that freedom of contract by the Natives is in any way interfered with, and that there is little possibility of a recruit not being fully informed of the conditions of the contract which he is concluding.

After describing the composition of the Native Labour Force, and setting out the present

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Witwatersrand Mine Natives' Wages Commission*, Government Printer, Pretoria, 1944, pp. iii + 61. 6s.

rates of pay, including the cash value of the remuneration received in kind (food, quarters, and medical treatment), the Report examines the arguments for and against increased remuneration, and discusses the economic position of the migrant labourer with special reference to conditions in the Native Reserves and the cash value to a family of crops produced for consumption or sale in the various reserves. A number of tables show examples of the incomes of different grades of mine-workers, personal expenditures of mine labourers, family budgets, and a *minimum scale of diet for a Native family in the Reserves*. The Report then gives the Commission's conclusions and recommendations on this question of remuneration. It points out that, after making a reasonable allowance for the value of produce from his holding in the Reserve, the income of the migrant mine-worker falls short of his present-day cash requirements; moreover, investigation has shown that unskilled workers in other industries earn a higher cash wage than is paid to the native worker in the Gold Mines. The Commission therefore recommends certain increases in basic wages for different grades of surface and underground workers, and in addition a cost of living allowance at a flat rate of 3*d.* per shift to every native mine-worker irrespective of his rate of pay; it also recommends an allowance towards the cost of boots and boot repairs to those labourers who are required to wear them. Further recommendations are made with reference to overtime rates and leave with pay. One section deals with the permanent native clerical employees; it is recommended that these workers should receive increases of cash wages and the grant of a cost of living allowance, and it is suggested that some scheme should be formulated to ensure their progression and promotion.

In considering the effect on the mining industry of the proposed wage increases, the Report points out that the increased annual expenditure involved (£2,600,000) should not be beyond the capacity of the industry. At the same time it recognizes that such additional expenditure would put a large body of ore outside the limits of payable working; while this problem is not within the province of the Commission, certain suggestions are offered as to ways of mitigating the effect on the pay limit of indirect taxation and charges levied by the Government on the Gold Mining industry.

At the conclusion of this section of the Report an urgent recommendation is made that 'drastic measures should be adopted for the amelioration of conditions in the Native Reserves and the increasing of their productive capacity; . . . the continuance of the system of migrant Native Labour upon which the Gold Mines are dependent for their prosperity must be subject to the native labourer receiving a wage which, together with his Reserve income, should provide him with a decent livelihood for himself and his family'.

The Commission is of the opinion that the proposed increases in the wages of mine-workers would have no harmful effect on conditions of employment or supply of labour in other industries, with the possible exception of the coal-mining industry. It emphasizes, however, the damaging effect on the economy of the whole country of a decline in the Gold Mining industry.

The last part of the Report deals with a number of other conditions in the industry, such as hours of work, shift organization, housing accommodation, facilities for medical treatment, recreation, and instruction. Under the heading of 'Redress of Grievances', the question of Trades Unions is discussed; the Commission does not recommend the establishment of Trades Unions for Native mine-workers at present, but suggests that the welfare of these workers should be the care of the Government, and that better methods should be devised for bringing to the consideration of employers grievances and suggestions for the improvement of conditions. It suggests the appointment of *Welfare Officers working under the Department of Native Affairs*, but states its view that the gradual evolution of Councils for mine-workers should be encouraged, and that such Councils as already exist should be recognized, and their scope enlarged.