

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

DER - 28
Kenya Trade Unions

October 7, 1954
c/o Barclays Bank
Queensway
Nairobi, Kenya

Mr. Walter S. Rogers
Institute of Current World Affairs
522 Fifth Avenue
New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

A dance was being held in Nairobi for railway employes of all races. A phonograph blared out American dance tunes. Groups of Africans, Europeans and Asians stood around, awkward and self-conscious. As an inter-racial gathering, it was not a great success. Most people fidgeted or danced, if at all, with partners of their own race. One tall, red-haired white man, however, spent the evening whirling around the dance floor with various African women. Then he left. "Boy, was I mad," he said later. "All those guys sitting around and do you think one of them would ask an African girl to dance? Not one! Why the -----!"

The tall white man is well known to hundreds of Africans in Nairobi. Few if any white men are accorded as much of their confidence and respect. Some Africans still have a degree of suspicion about him. "After all," one said, wistfully, "he's white..." But this seems to be wearing off and on the whole he seems to be well liked by the Africans.

The white man is Jim Bury and he is 38 years old. He used to be a slaughterhouse worker in the Burns & Co. meat plant at Vancouver, British Columbia, his home town. Now he is on the payroll of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the anti-Communist world labor organization with headquarters in Brussels. Among the ICFTU's affiliates are the CIO and the AFL. Bury's current assignment is to organize Kenya's embryonic African trade unions into something at least resembling a modern labor movement.

His job is not an easy one. The Mau Mau Emergency has created serious difficulties. Most of the union leaders are Kikuyu and some had been active in Kikuyu "nationalistic" politics. It is difficult to draw the line between that type of political activity and Mau Mau and several union leaders have been detained. The Kenya Government is sympathetic toward the fledgling unions, but the individual policeman does not always have the same attitude toward the "uppity" Kikuyu with his pockets stuffed with union pamphlets who protests in vigorous and excellent English when he is hauled off to a barbed-wire compound for "screening."

And there are other problems. Bury is outspokenly critical of the white settlers and the color bar, but he also can be critical of the Africans with whom he works. "The trouble is that fact and fancy are hopelessly entwined in their minds," he says. "They think they can never do anything wrong---it's always someone else's fault." He finds that most of the leaders have only a hazy notion of how to go about running a union. And many have always regarded the union treasury as their personal plunder.

But Bury is an old hand at fighting and organizing and he's not likely to give up. After he got his job with Burns & Co. in 1939, he

began organizing his fellow workers into a union. In 1942 it was finally certified as a local of the CIO United Packinghouse Workers. Then in 1947 Bury moved on to a bigger job---that of staff representative for the Packinghouse union in Vancouver.

His first task in his new job was to clean out the Communists who were in control of the British Columbia labor movement at the time. It took some time but by 1950 the Communists had been removed. "We did it different from the way they did it in America," Bury says. "We cleaned them out from the inside. In America they expelled the Communist unions then raided back their membership." Bury in the meantime had become the full-time secretary of the Vancouver Labor Council.

He "got tired" of Vancouver after a while and asked for a job with the ICFTU. "I was a member of the British Columbia Legislature at the time. I had been elected with the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation---that's like the British Labour Party. So before I could take a job with the ICFTU, I had to wait till I got defeated at the election. That wasn't too difficult."

The voters obliged. Jim packed up, said goodbye to his wife and three children and went to Brussels. His first assignment was Kenya and he arrived here the day after Christmas, 1953. He has worked here ever since with the exception of a short visit to the Northern Rhodesian copper belt.

His job puts him on contact mostly with Africans---though he does spend some time with government Labour Officers, for whom he has a great liking. In his dealings with Africans, the old problem of the color bar arises. For a while he lived in a hotel and used to invite Africans to tea in his room. "Finally the manager came around and said to me: 'You'll have to leave the hotel. We have no color bar here. We don't mind having Africans in the dining room or as guests. But we feel it will have a bad effect on the boys if Africans keep coming to your room.'"

"Well, I left the hotel, but I should have popped that little so-and-so in the nose first."

Similar rows ensued in other hotels in Kenya. Bury won't retreat on the matter of having African visitors but he does find that the homes of African unionists in the locations make better gathering places. He goes there often to drink beer and discuss union problems.

In a country like Kenya, with a rebellion on its hands and jittery that a Communist agent might pitch up to school the Mau Mau, the presence of any white man among the Africans raises suspicions. Bury complains that detectives have followed him around. But he has powerful sponsors---the ICFTU and its affiliate, the Trades Union Congress in Britain---and his position here seems to be secure. As a junior government official said: "If those chaps upstairs gave him the boot, they'd find James Griffiths on their necks." Griffiths, a Labour Party leader, was Colonial Secretary in the last Labour government.

Bury might get "mad" because no European asked an African girl to dance or he might feel like "busting" a hotel manager in the nose now and then, but he is no crusader. He is quite friendly and very frank.

When Bury is introduced to a local European, he often is greeted with a series of outraged questions. Examples: "But don't you know, old chap, these fellows are just down from the trees? How are you going to start a trade union movement when you don't even have civilization among the Africans yet? Why are you hurrying things?" Bury never gets ruffled, but is always ready with a quiet answer.

To the settlers, though, a white union organizer among black laborers is a "troublemaker," "Communist agent" and perhaps "traitor to his race." Their attitude extends to the Labour Department as well. One department official was told by a group of settlers: "Go home. Come back in 500 years."

Bury works closely with a young Jaluo unionist named Tom Mboya. Mboya received a high school education from the Roman Catholic missions and at the age of 22 was treasurer of the Kenya African Union, the nationalistic political organization headed by Jomo Kenyatta. Many of the KAU leaders were imprisoned with the outbreak of Mau Mau, but Mboya presumably was found to be "clean."

He continued working as a sanitary inspector for the city of Nairobi and organized a municipal employees union, now the Kenya Local Government Workers' Union. Then last year he took over the full-time job of secretary of the Kenya Federation of Registered Trade Unions, the colony's only labor federation.*

Mboya manages to tread a difficult path. On the one side is African nationalism and a little farther afield, Mau Mau. On the other side of the path is the government. Those who stray into the former side are apt to find themselves locked up; those who stray into the latter are apt to meet up with the Mau Mau executioner. Mboya is reserved and not in any way flustered around Europeans. In his new position, he bespeaks a fairly recent development in Kenya under which the Luo tribe are beginning to become politically conscious.

For a man just out from the well-organized and smoothly-functioning CIO and ICFU, the Kenya labor movement was something of an aegean stable to Bury. There were eight unions in the federation as follows:

- Transport and Allied Workers
- Domestic and Hotel Workers
- Kenya Local Government Workers
- Railway African Union
- Distributive and Commercial Workers
- Building and Construction Workers
- Tailors and Garment Workers
- Typographical Workers

Mboya puts the number of signed up members of all the unions at 55,000, but Bury says that 30,000 would be a better figure. At the time

* The "Registered" refers to the fact that they have complied with compulsory government registration.

of Operation Anvil, 70 per cent or 21,000 of the signed-up members were paying dues.* Bury regards that as a better indication of union strength. A Labour Department census put the number of Africans in non-agricultural employment during 1953 at 241,000. Thus the dues paying unionists would represent about eight per cent of that labor force. There are 212,000 agricultural workers, who are unorganized.

"The unions were built in an atmosphere where there was no real instruction given by experienced trade unionists," says Bury. "They've been just numbers movements. We're just getting to the point now where we're getting rid of non-paying members. I keep telling these guys: 'I don't care how small your membership is as long as everyone is paying dues.'"

"These guys thought it was better to collect membership cards than to build up a real, active paying membership. The Transport Workers, for instance, had been taking in everybody. There was no proper administrative machinery to look after the grievances of the members. They got little or nothing in return. You can't keep members when you operate that way."

Another big problem for Bury was in putting padlocks on the union cash boxes. One does not have to be "anti-African" to remark that a large number of Africans are not very scrupulous when it comes to handling other people's money. "Aside from the question of not trusting white men, some of the guys are still sore at me for demanding audits and watching expenditures," Bury says.

He also is trying to break up the practice of hiring paid collectors to gather members' dues. The Domestic and Hotel Workers Union had nine people on the payroll as collectors. They received a guaranteed salary plus percentages. In one month they collected Shs. 1,800 (\$257). Under the arrangement they kept Shs. 800 (\$114) as their share. "I'm trying to build up a system of unpaid shop stewards," says Bury. "But (sigh) the African likes to get paid for it."

Bury says when he first arrived, some of the unionists looked on him as a "gold mine" of ICFTU funds. He has been giving the federation £55 (\$154) a month to maintain its office and has bought a typewriter and some office furniture. The idea was that the federation would take over a larger share of this each month. Operation Anvil, as will be seen, hit the unions hard and not much progress has been made in this direction. "They've got to learn to function from the resources of their own members," says Bury. "That's the only thing that is going to last. I came out here to get them independent, standing on their own feet, and if they can't do it, we shouldn't foot the bill."

There is no law compelling employers to bargain with the unions, regardless of what membership they have. The Labour Department, though, always urges employers to do so whenever a union has a majority, or something near it, in a plant. But, Bury says, "Some of the unions go up to an employer's office and try to talk with him. He kicks them out

* Operation Anvil was the mass dragnet operation carried out against all Kikuyu in Nairobi last April and resulted in the detention of 25,000 Kikuyu. It is discussed in DER - 19.

of the office. So they go and complain to the Labour Officer. He telephones the employer and says, 'Look, talk to them, will you please.'" Even if a meeting is arranged, the union is often ignored, Bury adds.

But there has been progress in some fields toward union recognition. Examples:

---The Kenya Local Government Workers' Union has complete recognition in Mombasa and Kisumu for acting as the agent of African municipal workers on the Joint Staff Council of each municipality. The councils are composed of equal numbers of unionists and city officials and they meet to discuss wages, hours, working conditions and employe housing. Similar recognition is expected soon for the union in Nairobi.

---Railway African Union members sit on a Joint Staff Council in their industry. But there is an important distinction: they are not chosen by the union although they are union members.

---Wages Councils have been formed for two other industries and the unions involved select their own representatives. These are the Transport and Allied Workers' Union and the Tailors and Garment Workers' Union. The councils are set up by law and once they reach a decision on a minimum wage, or any other matter, the decision is binding on all employers within the statutory jurisdiction of the council. There are equal numbers of employers and unionists on each council, plus three "impartial" members chosen by government. One "impartial" member serves as chairman and at this stage he is always a Labour Officer. The councils meet at the request of either party to discuss wages or any other matter and try to reach unanimous decisions. If unanimity cannot be secured, a vote is taken. A similar council is to be established soon for the Domestic and Hotel Workers.

A friend of mine, representing the local bus company, once sat on such a council. The "management side" consisted of some European bus owners and some African bus owners. The friend found the African employers siding with him on each issue. Both complained that the "impartials" kept siding with the African unionists.

Along with these councils, the Labour Department has fostered the formation of some 60-odd Works Councils in individual plants. They have no statutory powers, but serve as a meeting place where employers and employes---whether organized or not---can discuss matters.

In addition to his other work, Bury has been helping to build a labor union in what is one of the largest enterprises in East Africa---the Mombasa docks. They are operated by the East African Railways and Harbours Administration, which is an agency of the East African High Commission, in turn supported by the governments of Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda.

Discontent among the unorganized dock workers over wages and housing conditions flared up in 1947 with a strike. But the ships continued to be loaded and unloaded by volunteers, including the Aide-de-Camp to the then Governor, Sir Philip Mitchell. Mitchell writes: "I feel sure the first time the Governor's ADC has humped

coal out of a ship in a colonial harbour."(*1) The strikers' demands were not met and they finally went back to work. The government, worried about future strikes and their paralyzing effect on the economy, appointed a commission to look into the workers' grievances and some awards were subsequently made to them. Along with this, an Industrial Relations Department was established, designed to encourage the growth of responsible labor unions.

One of the leaders of the 1947 strike was a Kikuyu named Chege Kebachia, who is said to have declared that anyone who would not join with him would have his ears slit---"A piece of trade union practice that caused some hilarity when related to the House of Commons," Mitchell writes.(*2) Kebachia was "deported" by government to the northern frontier.

Once during a safari, I pulled up at a remote outstation, Kabarnet, near Lake Baringo. The District Commissioner had just returned from a truck safari to the even more remote parts of his district. A Kikuyu clerk briefed him in very business-like tones on what had occurred while he was away---what communications had been received from the Secretariat in Nairobi, etc. The clerk was Kebachia.

"He was ordered to live here at Kabarnet," the D. C. explained. "He didn't like farming, so he asked if he could have a job here in the office. We gave him a starting job and then he started studying up and taking government promotional examinations. He's been promoted through several grades and now is in the Asian pay scale."

One wonders if the wily Kebachia will not wind up as District Commissioner some day.

Bury and his African associates have signed up about 700 dock workers so far for the new union. He is gunning for an immediate target of 3,000 or 4,000. Then he will ask that the union be allowed to designate the employee representatives on the Joint Industrial Council for the industry. This council was set up after the 1947 strike so that grievances could be aired and discontent kept at a minimum. Bury says he is going to press for wage increases. Laborers receive as little as five shillings (\$0.70) for an eight hour day. Two-thirds of the 6,000 dockers are day laborers.

The Mombasa docks provide an interesting example of what African labor can do under proper supervision. Even the mammoth cranes used in loading and unloading ships are operated entirely by Africans---mostly Kikuyu. The clerk/checkers are Africans, too, and Europeans occupy only supervisory positions.

The whole Kenya labor movement suffered a setback with the declaration of a State of Emergency in October of 1952. Since then, unionists complain, it has been difficult to get permission to hold meetings. It has been hard to obtain permits for traveling. A

(*1) Mitchell, "African Afterthoughts," London, 1954.

(*2) Ibid.

number of leaders have been detained. From the government's point of view, restrictions are necessary in order to combat the Mau Mau uprising.

Then Operation Anvil came along. It was not made public at the time, but many union leaders were picked up. Various figures were given as to how many---29, 39 or more. These discrepancies resulted from the difficulty of saying who was really a leader and who was really a follower.

"We protested to the government that these people had all been in the limelight and had all been watched closely by the police," said Bury. "Some of them had been screened for Mau Mau activities several times. If they were Mau Mau, it should have been known. But they were picked up in Anvil and the screenings they got then lasted only two minutes for each man.

"We suggested that the Commissioner of Labour make an investigation of what had happened to these union leaders. He detailed two assistants and they visited the camps. Then the Commissioner took their report to the Governor and the Governor ordered a re-screening of all the leaders on the basis of the answers he got from other officials to the question of whether there had been any discrimination against union leaders." (Government officials deny Bury's assertion that there had been discrimination against them.)

While Bury, as he puts it, was exerting pressure in Nairobi, the General Secretary of the TUC in England, Sir Vincent Tewson, was putting pressure on the Colonial Office back in Whitehall. "The result," says Bury, "was that 15 men who had been classified as black or gray were declared white and released. Others are coming out all the time."

Under Anvil procedure, a "black" is a Mau Mau activist, a "gray" is a fringe member and a "white" is someone completely innocent of any Mau Mau connection.

One Anvil casualty who has not been released yet is David Jomo, a young Kikuyu who is president of the Kenya Federation of Registered Trade Unions. In his absence, Mboya is carrying on as leader. Two others still in the "black" or "gray" pens had just returned from England, where they had taken a course in trade union procedure under the sponsorship of the Kenya government. Before they left for England, Bury says, they had been specially screened by the police. Another leader, who has been released, is to go to the Gold Coast soon to study trade unionism there. He is not happy about his 3 1/2 months behind the barbed wire.

With Anvil, some of the smaller unions closed up completely, but have since re-opened. With 25,000 Kikuyu removed from Nairobi, dues collections fell sharply. The Kenya Local Government Workers' Union had been receiving an average of £40 a month (\$112) from Nairobi members alone. Collections have been down to £5 (\$14) a month for the last three months. Dues are only a shilling (\$0.14) or two a month.

The Kikuyu, who have always furnished the bulk of the membership and leadership, are reluctant to "come into the limelight," as Mboya puts it. "They'd rather keep out of the way and hope they won't be

arrested," he said.

Mboya complains that the wives and children of Anvilized members were sent back to the Kikuyu Reserve although some of them had never lived there and had no place to go and no one to care for them. I am told on good authority that some women, children and old men either died or came close to dying from starvation. Camps have now been opened for them, but some are in such an emaciated condition that recovery would be difficult or impossible, according to my informant. The whole matter has been carefully hushed up.

Houses of the detainees were allocated to other tenants, so they have no place to go if they are ever released, Mboya said. No guarantees have been given that if released they would ever get their old jobs back. No guarantees have been made that their provident and pension fund contributions will not be lost. Personal property was abandoned.

The unions had the misfortune of getting caught in the middle when a war broke out. Bury says he is certain that there was no attempt to sabotage the trade union movement. "The government policy is one of giving encouragement to the unions---and they arn't just paying lip service," he says. The government at the moment is conducting a five-week course in trade union methods for 29 African unionists at the Jeanes School, near Nairobi. All expenses of the course and the cost of food and lodging for the men is being met by the government. Some of the men are being given allowances to cover lost wages.

As Mitchell indicates, unions are regarded as sacrosanct. "The House of Commons is very sensitive to anything involving people claiming to be trade unionists and these things generally give colonial governors a lot of explanatory telegraphing," he says.* Britain's unions are very powerful and very much accepted as a part of the national life. Their influence extends to the colonies as well. And no one ever forgets about the possibility that the Labour Party will be returned to power some day.

With the individual policeman and other individuals in the Security Forces, trade unionists are a different matter.. Their job is to stamp out Mau Mau as quickly as possible and it is no easy task to separate the Mau Mau-minded unionist from the others. The situation is complicated by the fact that the Kenya Police has expanded rapidly since the start of the Emergency and has picked up a number of individuals who regard every African who is not docile as a Mau Mau.

Looking to the future, one of the difficulties standing in the way of development of the Kenya unions along American or British lines is the race question. For at least a long time to come, the majority of employers will be white, the employes black. Thus to ordinary management-labor differences is added an explosive element, that of race tension. Anvil no doubt inflamed these feelings among the Kikuyu unionists. They could overshadow everything else.

R. E. Luyt, the Commissioner of Labour, recognizes this problem and has been urging employers to name African foremen to the management side at conference tables. "We want to emphasize firm loyalty, not

* Op. Cit.

race loyalty," he says. But the African unionists might not see things that way.

It is not likely that the unions will ever pick up any European members. Although there are a few Asian members in one of the federation's affiliates, the Typographical Workers, they do not take an active part. The Kenya labor movement remains a black affair. One gets the feeling that economic matters may take second place in the minds of many leaders. The White Highlands, political representation and the color bar might seem to be more important to them.

One encouraging fact is that the fledgling labor movement is linked with the anti-Communist ICFTU. The Communists, who would find much discontent here that could be used to their advantage, tried once to infiltrate into the African labor movement. But they were not successful.

A 1950 transport strike in Nairobi is said to have been engineered by an admitted Sikh Communist named Makan Singh. The strike was marked by threats that non-strikers would have their heads "shaved" with broken beer bottles.

Makan Singh also was active in an East African Trade Union Congress, which is said to have had some connection with the Communist World Federation of Trade Unions. The Congress had some Indians in its membership, but was largely an African affair. It was banned by government and Singh was "deported" to the northern frontier.

Jim Bury is not alone in regarding African wages as inadequate. A government committee recently urged that statutory minimum wages be raised considerably, the raises to be spread over a period of years, and added:

"The committee estimates that approximately one-half of the urban workers in private industry and approximately one-quarter of those in the public services, are in receipt of wages insufficient to provide for the basic needs of health, decency and working efficiency.

"This assessment of the adequacy of wages is made in relation to an adult male labour force living as single men under urban conditions.

"The committee is also of the opinion that, for a large section of the urban African labour force, wages are inadequate in relation to the work performed for the wages." *
(Italics are those of the authors of the report.)

On the committee's recommendation, the minimum wage was raised this year to Shs. 62/50 (\$8.92) a month. It had been Shs. 52/50 (\$7.50) a month. Employers must in addition provide housing or a housing allowance. Other raises are planned.

Labour Department officials say that wages in Nairobi are usually somewhat higher than the statutory minimum. They say a recent survey indicated that the average rate for unskilled starting laborers now is Shs. 90 (\$12.85) a month. Because of the labor shortages created

* Report of the Committee on African Wages, Nairobi, 1954.

by Anvil, wages have risen somewhat. Labour officials say the same starting laborers were getting Shs. 70 (\$10) and Shs. 75 (\$10.71) a month before Anvil.

Another aspect of the Kenya labor situation that draws criticism is a section of the Employment of Servants Ordinance listing "offenses by servants." "Servants" in this sense means African employes. One of the offenses is "desertion" from a job for which the African has signed or made his mark to a contract.

As the law stands, the contract has to be explained to the African in his own language before a magistrate---Labour Officers being considered magistrates for this purpose. Contracts may be made for any period up to two years, but officers say six months is the usual period.

Once the African has signed it or made his mark upon it, he is bound to serve out the term of the contract. If he deserts and if his employer makes a sworn statement to that effect before a magistrate, he can be arrested by any policeman, returned to the district from which he deserted and brought before a magistrate.

If convicted, he can be fined up to Shs. 100 (\$14), with six months in jail in default of payment. If he goes to jail, the time spent there is not counted as time served on the contract. Whether he pays the fine or serves out a jail sentence, he still can be sent back to the job. Not all are sent back though. If Labour Officers regard job conditions as unsatisfactory, the magistrate can terminate the contract.

Labour Department officials say that most employers do not find it worth their time to prosecute. Those who do, they say, are chiefly sugar and sisal plantation owners on the Coast. During 1952, 353 cases of desertion were brought into court by employers. There were 291 convictions.

At the same time, an employer can dismiss an employe at any time for "lawful cause." The contract is terminated and the employe is paid only up to the last day he worked. "Lawful cause" is not defined in the Ordinance, but a handbook put out by the Labour Department says it "includes drunkenness, insolence, wilful disobedience of lawful orders or serious negligence." If an employer does not dismiss an employe for "lawful cause," but merely has no further use for his services, he must pay him for the rest of the contracted period.

Another offense listed in the Ordinance is when an employe "wilfully or by wilful breach of duty or through drunkenness does any act tending to the immediate loss, damage or serious risk of any property placed by his employer in his charge..." During 1952, 79 prosecutions were brought by employers under this section. There were 73 convictions.

Some observers are critical, too, of the widespread custom under which employers levy "fines" on their African employes, deducting the fines from wages due. These fines are usually levied when an African employe has broken or damaged something or when some food has been consumed by an African servant.

In other respects, conditions have changed considerably from earlier years. An example, and one that affects labor, is taxation. One of the settlers' severest critics, W. McGregor Ross, Director of Public Works for the colony from 1905 to 1923, accuses them of pressuring the government into imposing high taxes on Africans so as to force them to leave the Reserves and work on European farms and in the towns.*

Ross quotes a report to the effect that more than £500,000 was collected in 1924 as direct taxes on Africans. The African poll (head) tax was then 12 shillings a year, or \$1.68 by today's rate of exchange. During that same year, Europeans paid less than £9,000 in direct taxes---at £1 a head, or \$2.80 by today's rates.

He also charges that Africans were discouraged from raising cash crops in their Reserves---from which they might have secured money for taxes. He and other critics maintained that the government exerted pressure on behalf of the settlers in the early 1920s to get Africans to leave the Reserves for paid employment.

It is a different picture today. An income tax now exists---though it did not come till World War II. Government realized £6,275,000 (\$17,570,000) in income, personal and estate taxes last year. These taxes theoretically apply to Africans as well (with the exception of the personal tax), but in practice are collected only from Europeans and Asians. During the year, African poll taxes yielded £1,079,000 (\$3,021,200), at up to 23 shillings (\$3.22) per head.

Cash crops now are being encouraged by the government and some African farmers are receiving what to them are fabulous amounts of money. At the moment an acre of coffee will bring £250 (\$700) a year. A class of Africans is coming into being that will never have to leave the Reserves to get not only tax money, but a good income.

Large numbers, however, will continue to seek European employment for various lengths of time. The Committee on African Wages estimated that more than one-half secure a job for a specific purpose only---to get money for a wife, clothing or taxes. Then they return home. Some have found that with an expanded population, their share of the family holding is too tiny to support them. Others, particularly among the Kikuyu, are landless. And still others are impelled by curiosity or the spirit of adventure.

There is little permanency in labor. In the towns, labor is of the floating sort. There is no established working class. Most workers are single or have left their wife (or wives) and children back in the Reserve to tend the shamba. Crime, drunkenness and discontent flourish in the predominantly male African locations.

The Committee on African Wages noted:

"The development of the migrant labour system is attributed to the fact that, to a majority of the country's employers, it has represented cheap labour, inasmuch as the worker needed only to be remunerated at rates appropriate to a single man.

* Ross, "Kenya From Within," London, 1927.

"The consideration that such labour has appeared cheap, and that it was available in apparently unlimited supply, is thought to have discouraged employers from concerning themselves with such matters as individual productivity and the effective use of labour."* (*Italics in the report.*)

Employers maintain that they cannot afford to pay higher wages because of the inefficiency of African labor. To this, Labour Commissioner Luyt says:

"It's been proved the length and breadth of Africa that efficiency will never precede higher wages. The general theme is, 'Let him make himself more efficient and we'll pay him more.'

"But the challenge is up to management, not the African. The African doesn't even realize that he is inefficient. He has no standards to guide him. But he can be made efficient and that calls for better training, better supervision and better management techniques.

"The only way you're going to make management make him more efficient is to force them to pay him more. Then they'll find they have to get by with fewer employees on a given task. That means they'll have to make sure those employees are efficient.

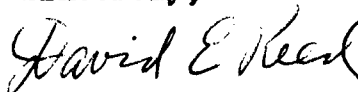
"In an industry with an enormous margin of profit, they don't bother with efficiency. But some of the other firms are beginning to feel the effect of rising wages and are beginning to look ahead.

"No man can keep himself and a wife on 90 shillings a month unless he has an augmented income from a plot in the Reserve. The only reason we've been getting away with it for so long is that the majority have a plot in the Reserve.

"But you know what that means---he's a half-baked farmer and a half-baked wage earner. That doesn't do African agriculture or local industry any good."

And the problem does not end there. Kenya will never have an established urban class of experienced and efficient African workers until decent housing and security for old age is provided. Until then, no African dares cut loose his ties to the Reserve. He remains a man with one foot on the tribal lands and one in European industry.

Sincerely,



David E. Reed

* Op. Cit.