

B.1. POLITICAL & GENERAL.

African Affairs. The most disturbing feature of the year 1947 was a general strike of African workers from 15th to 24th January. Certain grievances were known to exist and potential strike leaders mostly from dockers and railwaymen met the Labour Commissioner on Sunday 12th January and agreed to postpone action until their demands could be fully discussed. The extremists however, won the day and formed an African Workers Federation which established their headquarters in Makupa Road and organised the strike that began the following day with picketers preventing labourers and servants going to work and with bands of hooligans parading the streets. The Kavirondo element, especially the unemployed were used for coercion while Kikuyu influence from Nairobi provided the leadership. The strike was declared illegal, leaflets were dropped from the air, a loud-speaker van toured Majengo and Archdeacon Beecher in a se-

ries of meetings tried to persuade the strikers to return to work while their grievances were being investigated. The position showed little change, however, until 21st January when there were reports of certain groups being prepared to resume work. Addresses by Mr. Eluid Mathu on 23rd and 24th January worked on a gradually growing desire to end the strike and all labourers concerned returned to their employers on 25th January.

This African labour strike was well-organised and comparatively free from serious unpleasant incidents and it must be admitted that it took the Island by surprise. Serious dislocation was inevitable but the non-African population rallied well and essential services were generally maintained. It became evident to the strikers that

that they were not indispensable but it was equally evident that genuine grievances existed and a Trades Disputes Tribunal was quickly convened under the Chairmanship of Mr. Justice Thacker to hear detailed evidence and make recommendations that would be binding in all cases where a dispute was shown to exist.

The Tribunal sat from 14th. February to 17th. March and from 28th. April to 23rd. May and investigated every case with the utmost thoroughness and patience. Their Award, published on 20th June, made the following improvements, inter alia, in the lot of the African worker:-

- (a) An additional sliding cost of living with a maximum of 7/50 per month for those paid less than shs.72/- per month.
- (b) Additional allowances based on the Mundy Formula for those paid more than Shs.72/- p.m.
- (c) Additional allowances for 5 years' continuous service.
- (d) Overtime rates based on 48 hour week.
- (e) Annual leave with pay.
- (f) Proportionate increase in pay of 'casual labour'.

This Award was generally accepted by the African Workers and no serious labour troubles have since occurred. The African Workers Federation retained considerable power for many months after the strike and at the end of the year were still the focus of African unrest but their activities gradually became less economic and more political in character. They took it upon themselves to interfere in the proper working of law and order and justice- their brains Chege Kibachia, was found guilty of "conducting himself so as to be dangerous to, peace and good order" and deported- and, at the end of the year, fourteen other lesser leaders

were sentenced to terms of imprisonment for holding illegal courts and wrongful confinement.

The end of 1947 found the Federation still holding weekly meetings at the Sakina Mosque ground where many of the speakers regularly fanned the flames of labour and political unrest but their influence was decidedly on the wane and their financial position most uncertain. Their desire to be registered as a Trade Union was very properly resisted.

Very careful attention was given to means of establishing better contact with the Mombasa African population and to the restoration of confidence and more friendly relations. With these objects in view, we now have a tri-weekly broadcast in Swahili from Messrs. Cable and Wireless, a fully-equipped loudspeaker van, weekly meetings of African headmen, more frequent visits by administrative officers to the African locations and a Price Control office in the Makupa market. Welfare and Information rooms are being sited among the greatest concentrations of African population and plans have been prepared to establish in Majengo an administrative office with accommodation for a District Officer, a Labour Officer, a member of the Arab administration and the various commodity controllers. Mr. Patrick, Trades Union Officer spent some weeks in Mombasa lecturing on the basic principles and showing the way to proper collective bargaining. There was nothing much to show for his efforts by the end of 1947 but it can be hoped that sound Trades Unions will be formed when the element of political unrest is removed. Cost of living allowances to all African workers governed

by the Tribunal Award were substantially increased from 1st. December following a rise in the price-level index. It was unfortunate that these increases were made after the African Workers Federation had threatened another strike but at least a proportion of the labour force are satisfied that Government is watching their interests.