The Combined Labor Policy of the African Worker

The Combined Labor Policy was officially brought into operation in 1924 in terms of Department of Labor Circular No. 5 dated October 31, 1924.

In that Circular, the following definition of Combined Labor was given:

"Combined labor is labor rendered by persons whose standard of living conforms to the standard of living generally recognized as to laborers in the usual sense of the word."

The Circular went on to define "combined labor" in the following terms:

"Combined labor is that regarded as the labor rendered by persons whose

earnings are restricted to the requirements of the necessities of life rendered to un

skilled or underpaid workers."

Although no mention is made of 'color' in these definitions, in practice the

Circular term 'combined' has been interpreted to exclude Asians from the

rank of the Combined. As the Circular has stated, Asians were not seen as

workers of the Combined. In the Circular, it has stated that workers in the

Combined labor are regarded as uncombined, although generally speaking, Asians were not covered under the definition.

In the Circular, the policy has been one of justifying the employment of Europeans

as against non-Europees.

The Combined Labor Policy is to seek secure the employment of

Europees on unskilled or semi-skilled labor jobs of wages higher than

those prevailing for that type of work. The additional cost involved in

employing Europees is considered to more than make up for the lower wage rates enjoyed by the non-Europees.

Implementation of the Policy

Various measures have been adopted in order to implement the

Combined Labor Policy both for government employment and

employment in private industry is concerned.

As far as government undertakings were concerned, the Combined
Labour policy could be more easily implemented because the entire cost could be met out of public funds. Therefore direct action was taken to substitute European labour for African labour at higher rates of pay in different Government Departments.

(c) In the Goldfields Department between 1924-1933 African labourers employed rose from 9.5 to 37.3% of the total labour force, from 10,343 to 57,331.

(d) Other Government Departments in 1937 employed 8,000 European workers, mainly done by Africans.

The Department of Water Supply employed 2,000 unskilled African labourers in the Free State, Natal, and Transvaal for Central Government works.

The Provincial Administrations have also followed the same policy as for other public works as conceived.

It must be noted that in spite of the circular Labour policy, Africans have continued to be employed on unskilled jobs even in Government concerns because of the shortage of European personnel in face of the increased expansion of public undertakings such as the National Parks and the expansion of docks at Cape Town and elsewhere.

As far as private industry is concerned, private employers have not shown the same tendency to employ unskilled unterm labour, even with the increased cost involved. The Government has therefore had to adopt various devices to induce and compel private employers to follow the lead of the government. These devices have included:

1. the regulation of wages in industries to which the industrial council system is applicable, i.e., through the Wage Board
2. the manipulation of the existing tariff
3. denunciation by the Government in accepting tenders for government contracts
4. direct subsidies to employers using unskilled labour
The Regulator of Wages

The Wages Act was passed in 1928. It made provision for the regulation of wages, conditions of work in industries in which employers or employees were not organized under the Industrial Relations Act. Employers and workers who could not come to agreement were excluded from the operation of the Wages Act. The Wages Board functioned through a Wages Board of three members appointed by the Board. These boards were responsible for determining the conditions in which industrial enterprises, which included recommendations of the Board. The Wages Board was able to recommend to the Minister to remove the ability of the industry. The Wages Board was the actual concerned with the work of keeping up wage scales.

As it safeguarded the interests of workers for all classes of workers, manipulation of wages was not to happen. The production away of the community which would be gain full scope subject to the scrutiny of the Board.

The Wages Board was found that in all industry except British Industry, it would not recommend a wage for unskilled workers, even if the industry were to engage on. In all its recommendations the Wages Board showed different types of work.

The trend was directed toward wages for each, usually fixed according to the Board. The effect of wage determination is that only workers whose value to the employer is equal to the ability of work are retained. These wage determination affect the social condition of the labor employed. Wage regulation had little or no effect on the labor employed but it resulted in the low and less efficient workers being in demand and changes in the social condition of the labor employed. Everywhere in Europe were employed the number of efficient employed reduced.

Effects of Wages

The need of wage fixation, both by the industrial unions and the Wages Board had an effect of reducing workers' share value of the employers in less than the prescribed wage rates. Where the effect of industrial regulation has been suppressed to workers' living it was reduced by wage fixation. Workers were unable to earn a living according to the prescribed wage rates. The increase in wages led to the reduction in output.
increase in wage rates or to meet labour costs. A rise in labour costs must lead to reduction in the number employed. This applies not only to mining
but also to manufacturing enterprises. It appears that employers in this instance have not benefited from wage regulation. The importance of wage
regulation in the South African market lies in its effect not so much upon the privileged few whose wages may be raised as upon the great mass of workers who stand to gain by the
opportunity for employment so thereby created. The Wages Board, the Industrial
Councils, have attempted to raise the wages of semi-skilled and unskilled workers
by prescribing minimum rates of pay which in many cases have been substantially
above the prevalent. The result has been that labour costs have been raised and
the employing capacity reduced below the level which might have obtained
if statutory minimum rates had not been set up, Employing capacity has been reduced
although the total number of people has increased. The latter has been due to
the factor with an increased demand for the products of industry and the
consequent expansion of industry.

The same thing could apply to the farmers. Essential measures in wage rates
of African workers could not exist without and consequently reduce the number of workers
employed, unless African was permitted to enter the skilled categories of work, which
on turn would reduce the number of skilled farmhands employed.

Minimum wage rates which exclude from employment all those who cannot
profitably be employed at the rate will not raise the lowest wage, for they
preclude the supply of labour in the uncontrolled sections of the labour market
temporarily and to reduce wages. Yet has been the result of wage determinations
on both sides.

We are only hardly trained inefficient workers who may lose employment
as a result of wage regulation. Their wages minimum wages are based on the
length of service, any worker with small earnings are forced to diminish
workers when they become entitled to higher wages. And the position is even
worse in the case of beginning who are not taken on employment because
as beginning they are not the worth the wages prescribed for them, and
then in the position in which most African workers find themselves.
African Employment in Industry

Between 1924-5 and 1926-7 the number of Africans employed in private manufacturing industry doubled, while their wages were slightly raised. This was particularly so in the Witwatersrand area. More than half the total number of Africans employed in private manufacturing industry in 1926-7 was in this area, but wages did not rise very much.

In the Cape Western area, which is further from the mining centres, the number employed doubled and the wages also were appreciably raised. Similarly in Natal and the Transvaal. In particular industries of clothing, textiles, etc., the number employed and the average wages were related to the average for all industries.

In other words, despite the increase in the employment in manufacturing industry, Africans obtained an increase in employment due to the rapid industrialisation of the country. Of course there were other factors such as the rise in the cost of living, etc., which also contributed to the rise in wages in these industries. Of course, during the depression, wages were not raised, while Africans were retrenched. The course of employment has been influenced by the customs tariff which has been raised to implement the official industrial labour policy. Protection of the agricultural industry was made dependent upon the employment of a 'fair proportion of white labour'. In forcing the Tariff under the Customs Act, the Board of Trade's directive has been in view of the tariff in a manner to encourage the employment of industrial labour, tariff assistance in industries being partly conditioned on good labour conditions, and the undertaking that whenever possible, a large proportion of industrial labour be employed.

In addition to the regulations of the Union's Social Security Board, providing for approved lists of sweatshop labourers, the inclusion of the approval lists with those of South Africa, to which no mention is made in the Bill, may have been expected, since the Bill is not to limit the employment of unskilled labour.

African Employment in Other Areas.

Official policy has strengthened the factor which retarded the employment of Africans as skilled workers.
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1. There were prejudices against mixed marriage, the employment of Africans in most occupations other than menial work, and even a bias against education.

2. Prejudices prevented most Africans from adopting Europeans when the latter bore larger shares of the burden. In 1936-7, only 8 were Africans out of 20,000 married women. Only 89 were Africans.

3. In 1936 there were 16,000 African craftsmen working on their own account as urban area. They work independently supplying both European and Africans. As a rule they are not on a skilled basis. Europeans, owing to the lack of training opportunities and facilities, in the rural areas they have assumed that this is the best way.

4. A number of Africans are employed in agriculture. In 1936 there were between 5,000 to 10,000 African retail traders in the Rand. Their shops are small and they cater mainly for the African population. Very few urban areas and some Africans are taking up trading in the rural areas of the Transvaal. In 1950, the number of trading licences was increased from 220 in 1935 to 584 in 1950.

5. Teaching is a common occupation for educated Africans. The number of teachers is approximately 20,000.

6. And finally, employed by the African Department. Between 2036 and 1951.

7. A number of African women employed for a large number of European house servants in urban areas, being 13,000 men and 90,000 women.
Remedies for Erosion Farmers

(1) The development of the reserve
   (a) The introduction of sound agricultural system, better methods
        of land subdivision, land allocation, land use, etc. This will require
        research, education, and propaganda; improved methods of cultivation,
        and marketing.
   (b) The development of other activities besides farming in the Reserve
        to provide new alternative occupation for those who do not care
        to take up farming. Certain industries might be established
        in the Reserve, e.g., mining, forestry, dairy farming, etc. Industry
        furniture, tailoring, etc. Further will include by the
        recovery and water power, transport and capital. But solution
        the establishment of a Regional Development Authority.