

TRUSTEESHIP  
COUNCILDistr.  
LIMITED

T/CCM.5/L.121

7 June 1955

ENGLISH

ORIGINAL: FRENCH

COMMUNICATION FROM THE "FEDERATION DES TRAVAILLEURS  
AGRICOLLES, FORESTIERS ET PAYSANS DU CAMEROUN" CONCERNING  
THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

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C.G.T.

U.S.C.C.

WFTU

FEDERATION DES TRAVAILLEURS AGRICOLLES, FORESTIERS ET PAYSANS DU CAMEROUN

P.O. Box 15, DOUALA

No. 119 FAF

DOUALA, 18 May 1955

TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE TERRITORIAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CAMEROONS AT YAOUNDE

Sir,

We have the honour to draw the attention of the Territorial Assembly  
of the Cameroons to the following:

On 25 January 1955, the workers of the agricultural undertaking  
S.A.F.A., Dizangué, struck in order to show their dissatisfaction about the  
claims which they had put before Mr. CHAMAULT, the Director of the  
undertaking and Inspector of the S.A.F.A., who completely ignored this just  
claim of the workers of his undertaking.

During the strike, the workers of Dizangué called in the Union des  
Syndicats Confédérés du Cameroun (CGT). Three delegations from the U.S.C.C.  
headquarters were sent there and entered into talks with the management of the  
S.A.F.A. about the workers' claims.

In the course of the lengthy discussions between Mr. CHAMAULT,  
accompanied by Mr. FEZ, supervisor in the same undertaking, and our delegates,  
the Director undertook to satisfy the workers' claims which included the  
following points:

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1. Twelve days' leave for workers for 1954;
2. Full payment of wages without the compulsory deduction of 10 francs per day for rations; the rations, in any case, are meagre and inadequate;
3. Retention of the production bonus;
4. Shortening of the pay period to the legal period of eight days after the end of the month, and not fifteen days as usually happens at Dizangué;
5. No dismissals for striking;
6. Respect for trade union freedom and freedom to exercise it in this agricultural enterprise;
7. Construction of sanitary permanent dwellings for African workers.

Our delegates also asked Mr. CHAMAULT to apply the minimum guaranteed inter-professional wage (wage scale) which is 10.50 francs per hour at Dizangué in accordance with Order No. 5270 of 7 October 1954 which so far has not been applied to the S.A.F.A., Dizangué, no more than any of the other orders applying the Labour Code already promulgated.

Mr. CHAMAULT fully agreed to this also. The new rate was to be applied with effect from 1 October 1954.

All the directors of agricultural undertakings in the Cameroons continue to follow the 48-hour week specified in Order No. 139 CTP of 31 July 1953 (article 112 of the Labour Code, Act No. 52-1322 of 15 December 1952). They take pleasure in subjecting the poor African workers to a slave system, a system of oppression and misery. Thus, for example, in the S.A.F.A., Dizangué, plantation the workers do stints; in other words the daily quota is from 250 to 375 tappings, while the wage paid per stint is 59 to 65 francs. This is a starvation wage and constitutes a continuation of the forced labour and of the indigénat system which men like Mr. CHAMAULT hope will return.

Mr. CHAMAULT also agreed that a sick worker who went to the clinic for medical treatment would have no further deductions from his wages and that leave of absence on the occasion of the death of a worker, or a worker's relative, would henceforth be paid, so that workers could freely join the funeral procession.

But Mr. CHAMAULT has remained adamant about wage increases, which is the main point which stirred the workers to revolt.

The most disgusting aspect is that Mr. CHAMAULT kept none of the promises made to the workers' representatives, which proves that Mr. CHAMAULT has only evil intentions and does not wish to satisfy the legitimate claims of the African workers in his undertaking.

To sugar the pill, or rather to sow the seeds of dissension among the workers, he circulated a rumour that he had granted a 1,400 franc bonus only to the tappers, but we have been informed that the tappers are not receiving it.

We take note of the systematic sabotage of the orders applying the Labour Code and of the fact that the legitimate claims of the workers are not being satisfied at the behest of Mr. CHAMAULT, Councillor in the Cameroonian Territorial Assembly, who is opposed to the social progress which the French Government has undertaken to promote in the Cameroons.

We know that Mr. CHAMAULT must have nightmares when he sees social progress in this country, when he thinks of the old days when the indigénat system and forced labour were prevalent in Africa. In those days in the Cameroons, Mr. CHAMAULT, with all the privileges granted to him by the colonialist Administration, recruited thousands and thousands of workers, whom he sometimes cheated out of their money. It is too bad that those times are past and that these hateful and inhuman practices are condemned.

We request you to be kind enough to tell Mr. CHAMAULT that the 3,500 Cameroonian workers who drudge in the plantation of the S.A.F.A., Dizangué, are not slaves in the Middle Ages, but free citizens who are entitled to decent wages and to treatment worthy of free men.

The mass dismissals which took place after the strike, when over 200 workers were thrown into the street because they had joined the C.G.T., are rousing all the labour elements in our country.

We unanimously condemn the anti-labour acts which Mr. CHAMAULT, Director of the Dizangué plantation, is committing against the African workers in his undertaking.

Accordingly, we appeal to the Territorial Assembly of the Cameroons, requesting it to approach the management of the S.A.F.A., Dizangué, in order that the claims of the workers of that agricultural undertaking may be satisfied at the earliest possible date.

Should the claims of the workers of that undertaking not be satisfied, we decline all responsibility for any demonstrations by the workers.

Trusting that the Assembly will do everything in its power to bring about agreement between the workers and the management of the S.A.F.A. so that the workers' claims may be satisfied, I have the honour to be etc.

For the Federal Office

(Signed) MBILLA Marcus

General Secretary

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