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TRADE UNIONS INTERNATIONAL OF  
AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY WORKERS  
Via Boncompagni 19, ROME, Italy.

Rome, July 26, 1955

Circular letter No. 11/55 - To all plantation workers' organisations -  
Ref. No. 407/EV  
Subject : The Third Session of the  
Committee on Work on Plantations ( I.L.O.)

Dear Brothers : -

The Governing Body of the I.L.O. ( International Labour Organisation ) has decided to convoke the Committee on Work on Plantations from 17 to 29 October this year. Hitherto, this Committee has held only two Sessions : the first one in 1950 in Bandoeng, the second in 1953 in Havana. At these two sessions the problems in discussion were subjected to a general examination.

At the Second Session the Committee examined more profoundly two particular items :

- a) Regulation of Wages;
- b) Health and Sanitary Services on Plantations.

The Third Session will examine :

- a) the living and working conditions and productivity on plantations;
- b) steps to be taken in the concerned countries and industries in order to regulate employment and earnings of the plantation workers.

It is possible that the conclusions which the Committee will reach will be subjected to the next International Labour Conference for the adoption of international rules.

The Committee is composed of representatives from the following countries : Belgium, Burma, Brazil, Ceylon, China, Columbia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Egypt, France, India, Indonesia, Netherlands, Peru, Portugal, United Kingdom.

It is useful that the organisation of the above mentioned countries take the necessary steps so as to include within the delegations of their respective countries - as workers' representatives - persons charged by them or however those giving guarantee of effectively defending the workers' interests and presenting their demands to the governments.

We are calling upon all plantation workers' organisations to collaborate with our Secretariat in order to efficiently intervene with the aim of making the workers' demands relating to the items on the agenda accepted by the Committee. This collaboration will be efficient :

- a) if the organisations widely discuss at the rank and file these problems so as to specify their demands;
- b) if the problems and demands be brought known to the public opinion of their respective countries by meetings, debates on the press, conferences, etc.;
- c) if they ask all political groups and MPs of all tendencies for the necessary support so as to make the workers' demands accepted by the governments.

It is necessary to keep in mind that the Committee will study the proposals to be made but it is the International Conference - in which all governments will be represented - that will decide on the steps to be taken for the protection of workers. Therefore, the work we are suggesting to all plantation workers' organisations is necessary in order to draw the attention of the governments to your problems.

The greater pressure you will be able to exercise on the MPs of your country obliging them to defend the workers' demands, the greater is the possibility that your demands will be accepted.

The item a) on the agenda referring to productivity on plantations is of particular importance, connected with the great inquiry on overexploitation which has been launched by the WFTU.

Therefore, we are requesting you to follow with attention the employers' attempts of increasing intensity of work and speed up and to mark us all cases.

We are citing here an example : in Cameroon, on the rubber plantations of Dizangué ( see page 69 of the Information Bulletin, 1955 ), the number of cuts on the rubber trees to be performed by workers each day was increased from 250 to 375 ( a 50% norm increase ) without any wage increase and this in the name of " productivity

Hitherto, the Committee on Work on Plantations has treated of the following items :

1. Recruitment and Engagement of Labour.
2. Regulation of Employment.
3. Hours of Work, Weekly Rest and Holidays.
4. Regulation of Wages ( Establishment of Minimum Wages, Determination of Wages for the different workers' categories, Protection of Wages, Professional Classification, Supplementary Wages ).
5. Workers' Housing.
6. Supply of Food, Clothing and Other Necessities.
7. Education and Training.
8. Health and Social Security ( medical care, care of maternity, medical visits at the engagement and care of hired workers, sanitary orders, supply of water, etc.).
9. Industrial Relations.
10. Labour Inspection.

We are kindly requesting you to send us a report on all these items and on those to be discussed at the next Conference, explaining the present situation and fixing the workers' demands.

We are counting on your valuable collaboration in view of the common action we intend to carry on in favour of plantation workers.

With best wishes.

Yours Fraternally,

Ilio BOSI  
General Secretary.

