



WE CAN MAKE THIS A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE IN... BOB WEINSTEIN

Report of Hearing Before Budget Bureau

In Connection with the Hearings Before the U.S. Bureau of the Budget On the Budget for the Panama Canal Zone. October 9, 1946.

The United Public Workers of America, CIO, presents this statement on behalf of the many thousands of employees of the United States Government employed in the Panama Canal Zone who are members of our organization. The rea-

is 25 percent higher than that in the Continental United States, since the "gold" workers are paid 25 percent more than prevailing federal salary scales. Thus the average pay for the latter is \$3900 per year.

We are not now in position to submit actual figures on the cost of living in the Zone proper. However, the data given below in Table II depict the

ies.

From the same source, we find that housing costs in Panama run from \$80 to \$150 per month for an unfurnished apartment. We find that attendance at grammar school in the Zone costs \$4 per month per child, and at high school \$8 per month.

It is therefore clear from the statistics that the conditions of existence of almost 30,000 employees of the Government of the United States are deplorably sub-standard. From the accounts of our members in the Zone and our representatives who have visited there, these conditions are such as would in fact not be tolerated in this country. Slum housing, for example, with five people in a single room without running water and with community toilets. Or the excessive disease and mortality rates.

These conditions arise directly out of the incredibly low wage scales. They cast discredit upon our government, not only in Panama, but throughout Latin America. President Taft's statement that American policy in Panama is the mirror of our policy in Latin America has not been forgotten.

TABLE II

RETAIL FOOD PRICES IN PANAMA

Sources: U. S. Department of Commerce, Office of International Trade, "International Reference Series, Vol. III, No. 24, July 1946" A

Item	Unit	Price
Bacon	Pound	\$ 70
Bread	"	.10
Butter	"	.55
Coffee	"	.40
Eggs	Dozen	1.00
Fish, fresh	Pound	.30
Cream Beans, fresh	"	.15
Lamb Chops	"	.65
Lard	"	.35
Milk	Quart	22½
Flour	Pound	.07½
Jam	"	1.20
Evaporated Milk	14-oz. can	.17
Soap, powdered	"	.45
Cheese, American	Pound	.80
Chickens, dressed	"	.70
Pork Chops	"	.70
Potatoes	"	.12½
Rice	"	.10
Tea	"	2.25
Dried Beans	"	12½

A Based on reports from the United States Embassy in Panama City.

Panama, October 25.—

The meeting was scheduled for 7:30 but from 6:00 people started drifting in by twos and fours. By 7:15, there were hardly any seats left, and those were away over to the right or left of the Stadium. The playing of the national anthems of Panama and the United States was the signal that the meeting was under way. Selected as MC for the night, Luis A. Victor kept the crowd laughing at his wisecracks. After Brothers Atherton, Arauz, Nolan, and Burke spoke, Eddie Cheresch introduced Jack Strobel.

Strobel, speaking for the International body of the CIO promised that the CIO won't let us down. As proof that the CIO means business, he said that he had been sent to stay in Panama for at least six months, or as long as necessary, to help us. And, said he, that was not all. They were quite ready to initiate legislation in Congress, or any other support necessary for our success. Above everything, he implored us to stick together... regardless. The long standing problems, the problems of 20, 30, & 40 years, cannot be solved overnight. They will take time and our patience.

He knows why we joined up with the CIO. We want better wages, we want better housing, and above all, we want to end this undesirable racial discrimination. He knew all these things and he has gotten down to work. He has already conferred with the executive office at Balboa Heights. General Newcomer and Col. Wang discussed with him a grievance procedure, wage increases, office space, & a pension system. He was not surprised if progress was very slow. He would have been surprised if it had not. He closed his talk asking us all to work with him while he worked with us.

The next speaker, Bob Weinstein, came in like a heavyweight boxer of the Joe Louis class. He pointed out that most people in the U. S. think of the Panama Canal as a place where ships go thru one end and come out at the other while a couple of people push a few buttons. They don't realize so many people live down here. And that such a large number of people employed by the U. S. govt. were afforded such an un-American standard of living. Said he, "Discrimination takes the strangest forms, but I have never seen a dark skinned

person who did not eat the same as a white man does."

Before the CIO started its drive here, hardly anybody in the U. S. knew about the PC, but now, everybody wants to know—"What is happening in the Canal Zone?" Even as far as Hawaii, the question is the same. And we will give them the answer—with this new instrument of ours—the union.

"But if you never got a raise," he continued, "if you never got shorter hours, you would still have the satisfaction of walking with your head up, like a man!" He pointed out how much our children's future was tied up on a \$13. per-week salary. How they lacked the proper education, proper food, the proper clothes. That was the purpose of the CIO: to put meat in the icebox carpets on the floor, bread on the table, and pictures on the wall. He, too, implored us to be patient. He feared not for the enemies from outside. He feared of what might happen from within. "Don't let them split you—Panamanians on one side, and West Indians on the other," he said. In his interview with General Newcomer, he asked for higher wages for us and pointed out that even if we got it, we have already spent it since prices had gone sky high. They also discussed a pension system, a grievance procedure, and asked that someone from our group sit in on the Wage Board. While in Washington, he visited the Budget Bureau and asked for improvements for "silver" workers on the Canal Zone. When he returns, he will go to the National Convention of CIO, make his recommendations. They and the PAC will initiate or introduce legislation in Congress. He will even propose that someone from here go up to testify in Congress. He closed by asking us all to support our union officers and stand behind the union program. Said he, "We can make this a better place to live in."

The next speaker, personal representative of His Excellency President Enrique A. Jimenez, Don Antonio Moscoso B. was warmly applauded when he pointed out that he was once of the laboring class, just another guy with his working tools down at Albrook Field, and around Corundu. Forcefully he contrasted the attitude of certain unfriendly Americans here and in the U. S. with the other friendly, fairminded

(TURN TO PAGE 3)

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