



Trade unions and cost of living investigations

Silke Neunsinger

Swedish Labour Movement archives
and library

Trade unions and cost of living studies

- collection of data on cost of living by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)
- cost of living data, labour unrest and wage negotiations in South Africa during Apartheid

- histoire croisée (Michael Werner & Benedicte Zimmermann)
- budgeting and the social meaning of money (Vivianna Zelizer)
- division of workers (Ashwini Deshpande)

Constructions of remuneration

- rate for the job
- rate for the need of income
- combinations

International organisations' access to income data

- wage statistics: in some regions delivered by banks
- analysis of consumption as ways of measuring wage levels in regions with large informal economy
- regions with strong bargaining traditions deliver the most systematized data

The ICFTU household budget study from 1950

I. C. F. T. U.
INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS
24, rue du Lombard, Brussels, Belgium

President:
P. FENET

General Secretary:
I. H. OLDENBURGER

Telephone: 11.53.45 - Telegrams: INTERCONFED BRUSSELS - Bank: BANQUE DE BRUXELLES

Our ref.: AB/AN/O.No.3 Soc. -Circ. 22
Your ref.: Brussels, 13th July 1950

To affiliated organizations

Dear Friends,

I should be grateful to you if you would co-operate with me in a comparative study of living costs and living standards of workers and salaried employees in different countries which we plan to undertake on the basis of family budgets.

I feel that such an international family budget study, which has not yet been satisfactorily undertaken by any international organization, is needed for the information of the general public. Moreover, an international family budget study of the kind we are planning could furnish useful data for the refining of living cost indexes; for living cost indexes to be realistic ought to be based on actual family budgets rather than, as is frequently the case, on arbitrary assumptions about the articles which go into a worker's family budget and the weight they have in the budget.

I feel that an international family budget study will be extremely useful even if undertaken on a moderate scale, as it would be possible for the affiliated organizations and the Secretariat of the ICFTU; but even on the most moderate scale a study of this kind can be undertaken only if the national trade union centres are ready to co-operate with us.

To make it possible for the affiliated trade union centres to participate in this project without a large statistical machinery, I propose that each participating organization confine the collection of the income and expenditure data to about twenty workers' families and, if possible, to about twenty families of salaried employees with moderate incomes.

As to the selection of the families, to the method of distributing and collecting the income and expense account books, and to other technical questions, you will find information in the enclosed technical note. I am also enclosing samples of a questionnaire which every participating family is supposed to fill out and of a covering letter from me to each of the participating families.

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As soon as we have the assurance of your co-operation with our family budget project, I will send you the required supply of the questionnaire, of the covering letter to the participating families, and of the income and expense account books for the first month.

May I suggest that you select the families at your earliest opportunity and request that they start posting their receipts and disbursements on the first of the month following receipt of the income and expense account books. I also suggest that you send us the books as soon as possible after they have been returned to you at the end of each monthly posting period.

As you will gather from the enclosed letter to the participating families, we plan to make a modest present to each participating family which has kept records for a year. I hope that this will meet with your approval and that we can count on your co-operation in distributing the presents.

May I also ask you to send me from time to time lists of retail food prices in co-operative stores so that we can broaden the basis of our information on food prices in connection with our family budget project.

I would finally suggest that all technical questions which may arise either in the preparatory stage or in the course of the collection of data be directly discussed between the officer in charge of this work in your organization and Mr. Alfred Braumthal, head of our Economic and Social Department.

I should greatly appreciate it if you would advise me at your earliest opportunity whether I can count on your co-operation in this study and if you would give me the benefit of any suggestions which you may wish to make.

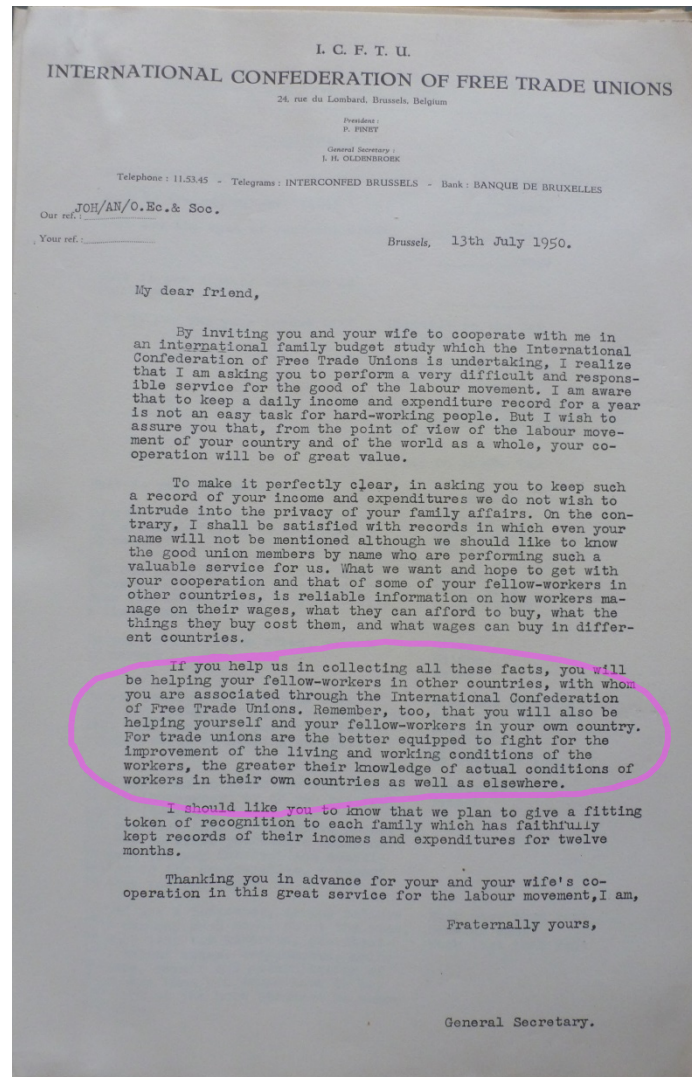
Thanking you in advance for the co-operation you may be able to give us in this project, I am,

With fraternal greetings,

Yours sincerely,

General Secretary.

Letter to the workers



Food and clothing

Annuaire

LISTE DES PRIX DE DETAIL DE CERTAINS BIENS DE CONSOMMATION

Donner les chiffres pour une ville représentative des industries lourdes. Pour les denrées donner les prix des coopératives, pour les autres articles les prix des grands magasins.

<u>Denrées</u>	<u>Unité</u>	<u>Prix</u>
Pain blanc	kg	
Pain de seigle	"	
Farine ordinaire	"	
Viande de bœuf (pot-au-feu)	"	
Porc (rôti)	"	
Veau (rôti)	"	
Mouton (ragout)	"	
Lard gras	"	
Saucisson sec	"	
Corned beef	"	
Poisson (filet de cabillaud)	"	
Hareng (fumé)	"	
Sardines	1 boîte	
Lait entier	litre	
Bœurre	kg	
Margarine	"	
Saindoux	"	
Huile	"	
Fromage (plus que 20% de matières grasses)	"	
Oeuf	pièce	
Sucre raffiné	kg	
Marmelade	"	
Pommes de terre (vieilles)	"	
Tomates	"	
Choux	"	
Carottes	"	
Petits pois (frais)	"	
oignons	"	
Pommes	"	
Oranges	"	
Bananes	"	
Raisins secs (sultanines)	"	
Prunes séchées	"	
Café grillé	"	
Cacao, qual. moyenne	"	
Thé (d'Inde)	"	
Bière	litre	
Vin ordinaire	"	
Schump s (alcool)	"	

<u>Vêtements</u>	<u>Unité</u>	<u>Prix</u>
Chaussures de travail pour homme	1 paire	
Chaussures pour dames (sport)	1 "	
Chaussures pour garçon, pointure 23/26	1 "	
Chaussures pour fille, d'été avec semelle en cuir	1 "	
Sandales d'enfants	1 "	

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<u>Vêtements</u>	<u>Unité</u>	<u>Prix</u>
Sous-vêtements homme (coton)	1 pièce	
Caléçon homme (coton)	1 "	
Sequettes homme	1 paire	
Complet homme, trois pièces, laine, confection		
Pullover homme, laine	1 pièce	
Robe de femme, laine, confection	1 "	
Parure, femme, soie artificielle	1 "	
Bas, nylon, femme	1 paire	
Parure pour fille, soie artificielle	1 "	
1 trousse pour bébé:		
6 Mouletons		
1 dz. de couches, fil		
1 robe de bébé		
Tissu en laine pour dames, 1,40 largeur	1 m.	
Draps 1,50 x 2m	1 pièce	
1 couverture en laine		
1 serviette éponge		
1 torchon (cuisine)		

<u>Articles de ménage</u>		
1 tasse avec soucoupe, porcelaine simple sans décoration		
1 théière		
verre		
savon de ménage (1 kg)		
savon de toilette (1 kg)		
1 boîte d'allumettes		
1 réparation chaussures homme, semelle et talon		
1 coupe de cheveux homme		
1 lit en fer avec matelas (qualité bon marché)		
1 chaise de cuisine		
1 table de cuisine		

Critique from the Swedish Trade union Confederation

1. representativeness
2. comparability
3. costs

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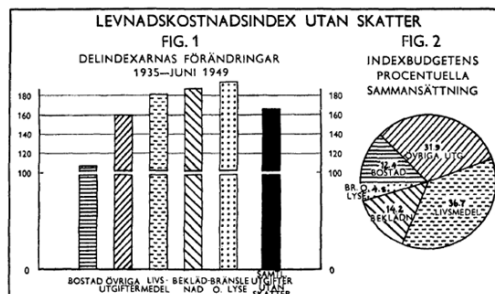
PERIODISKA ÖVERSIKTER

Levnadskostnadsindex för juni 1949

Beräkningens huvudresultat. Beräkningen av levnadskostnadsindex för juni har givit till resultat, att generalindexen utan skatter och sociala förmåner kvarstår oförändrad i såväl 1935 som 1914 års serie vid respektive 166 och 256. Omräknas indexen i 1935 års serie till s. k. pristal i enlighet med de regler, som uppdragits av 1945 års lönekommitté, erhålles talet 122 mot 121 vid närmast föregående beräkningstillfälle.

De olika delposterna. Detaljerade uppgifter om levnadskostnadernas förändringar finnes i tab. 3 och 4 liksom i diagrammen på sid. 565 och här nedan. Beträffande delposterna i beräkningarna kan följande nämnas.

Livsmedel. Den sedan mars inträffade ökningen av livsmedelskostnaderna uppgår till 0,4 %. Inom posten har till följd av bl. a. ändrade normalpriser rätt avsevärda prisförskjutningar ägt rum. Sålunda har beträffande nötkött priserna stigit på stek, rev samt köttfärs. Dessutom har prishöjningar konstaterats på stek och bog av gödkalv samt fläskkotlett. Bland kött- och charkuterivarorna har även prissänkningar förekommit bl. a. på salt sidfläsk, fläskkorv samt färsk och rökt skinka. I samband med matfetsransoneringens upphävande har priset på smör undergått en markerad stegring och margarinpriset en i öre räknat lika stor sänkning. Vidare har under kvar-



LEVNADEKOSTNADSIINDEX FÖR JUNI 1949

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Tab. 1. Levnadskostnadsindex (1905 = 100)¹

År	Månad	Levnadskostnadsindex (1905 = 100)					Årsmedeltal	Månad	Levnadskostnadsindex (1905 = 100)					Årsmedeltal	
		Bostad	Övriga livsmedel	Bekladbränsle	Skatter	Samtliga utgifter			Bostad	Övriga livsmedel	Bekladbränsle	Skatter	Samtliga utgifter		
1935	dec.	100	100	100	100	100	100	1942	dec.	161	101	180	186	146	162
1935	dec.	103	100	101	100	101	101	Årsmedeltal	161	101	177	182	142	160	
1938	mars	104	99	109	101	100	101	1943	mars	169	102	180	184	147	168
	juni	104	99	101	101	100	101		juni	161	102	188	184	148	168
	sept.	103	99	108	101	100	101		sept.	159	102	180	179	148	161
	dec.	104	99	108	102	100	102		dec.	160	102	188	178	148	162
	Årsmedeltal	104	99	108	101	100	101	Årsmedeltal	161	102	191	182	147	162	
1937	mars	106	98	104	104	101	108	1944	mars	159	102	188	178	149	161
	juni	107	98	108	107	109	104		juni	159	102	181	178	149	161
	sept.	110	98	112	108	108	106		sept.	161	102	188	178	149	162
	dec.	111	98	118	108	103	106		dec.	158	102	181	178	149	161
	Årsmedeltal	108	98	108	108	102	104	Årsmedeltal	159	102	188	178	149	161	
1938	mars	110	99	112	108	108	106	1945	mars	159	102	181	178	149	161
	juni	111	99	111	108	108	106		juni	157	102	180	178	149	161
	sept.	113	99	108	108	108	107		sept.	159	102	181	177	149	161
	dec.	118	99	108	108	104	107		dec.	157	102	188	176	149	160
	Årsmedeltal	112	99	110	108	103	106	Årsmedeltal	158	102	181	177	149	161	
1939	mars	118	100	108	108	104	108	1946	mars	157	102	188	176	149	160
	juni	114	100	107	108	105	108		juni	161	102	181	178	149	161
	sept.	117	100	114	110	106	110		sept.	161	102	173	174	149	161
	dec.	120	100	120	118	112	114		dec.	161	103	178	187	150	164
	Årsmedeltal	115	100	111	111	106	109	Årsmedeltal	159	102	180	177	149	161	
1940	mars	127	100	138	128	114	119	1947	mars	165	106	179	177	148	164
	juni	138	100	146	139	119	124		juni	158	106	173	176	150	168
	sept.	134	100	159	140	121	126		sept.	172	108	188	179	150	168
	dec.	140	102	155	148	124	131		dec.	172	108	186	180	150	168
	Årsmedeltal	131	100	142	133	119	123	Årsmedeltal	167	108	181	180	150	168	
1941	mars	153	102	158	168	129	140	1948	mars	180	107	191	182	157	168
	juni	149	102	161	166	131	140		juni	181	107	191	188	158	164
	sept.	148	100	173	171	133	141		sept.	185	107	199	184	158	168
	dec.	166	100	173	174	136	145		dec.	183	107	195	188	160	168
	Årsmedeltal	149	101	164	164	131	139	Årsmedeltal	180	107	192	188	157	162	
1942	mars	161	101	176	179	140	149	1949	mars	181	107	198	186	160	168
	juni	165	101	175	189	143	151		juni	181	107	194	187	160	168
	sept.	168	101	181	187	145	152		sept.	181	107	194	187	160	168

talet fiskpriserna, som låg högt i mars, undergått vissa sänkningar. Bland övriga prisförändringar, som inträffat, kan nämnas, att stoppriset på kaffe och kakao sänkts och att normalpriset på fiskbullar höjts, samt att priset på mjöl undergått en sänkning.

Inom posten bränsle och lyse har prissänkningar förekommit på eldningsolja och hushållskol, under det att endast smärre prisjusteringar såväl uppåt som nedåt konstaterats på övriga bränsleslag.

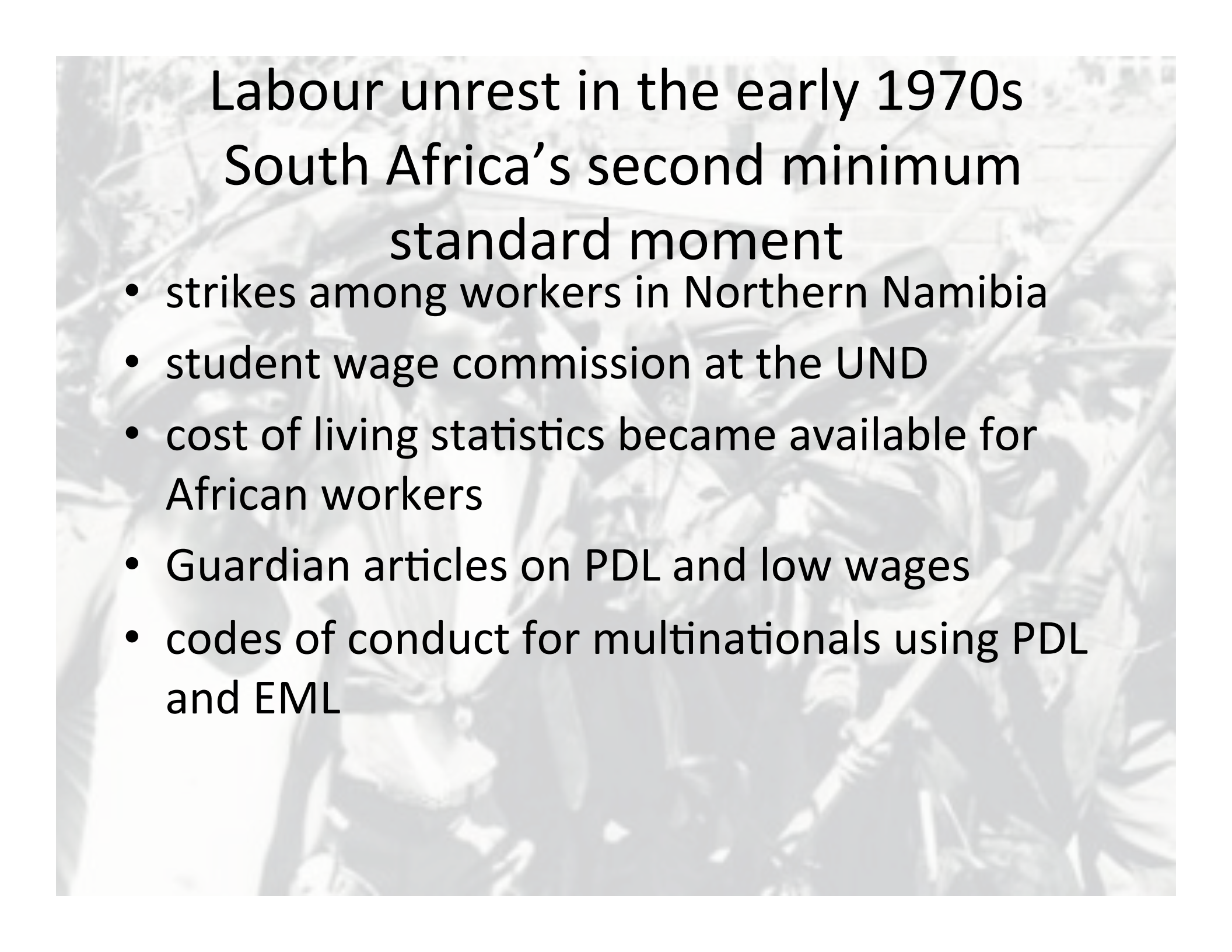
Bostadsposten har icke varit föremål för omräkning vid detta beräkningstillfälle.

Inom posten kläder och skodon har smärre prisförändringar förekommit på ett flertal varuslag. Prishöjning har därvid konstaterats på bl. a. viss

¹ Årsmedeltalen i tabellen är övriga medeltal för fem kvartal (dec., mars, juni, sept. och dec.).

First minimum standard moment in South Africa

- studies on poverty among Europeans in SA carried out by Carnegie Corporation in the 1920s
- mining experts defining minimum needs
- Edward Batson's Social Survey on Cape Town
- Poverty Datum Line (PDL) and Effective Minimum Level (EML)
- CPIs only on Europeans' consumption



Labour unrest in the early 1970s

South Africa's second minimum standard moment

- strikes among workers in Northern Namibia
- student wage commission at the UND
- cost of living statistics became available for African workers
- Guardian articles on PDL and low wages
- codes of conduct for multinationals using PDL and EML

5.

Clothing Component for Male Adult

Items Lasting One Year	Parys	Kroonstad	Kimberley
1/3 Overcoat (one over 3 years)	2.33	2.66	5.98
1 Sports jacket	5.49	7.99	14.95
2 Pairs flannel trousers	9.98	15.10	14.00
2 Pairs of brown walking shoes	9.98	9.98	8.00
4 White shirts (long sleeves)	10.36	11.96	8.00
4 Pairs of underpants	1.96	2.36	0.78
2 Vests	1.18	1.18	0.78
1 Sleeveless pullover	5.69	3.50	4.95
3 Pairs of socks	1.77	1.65	1.17
1 Pair pyjamas	2.59	1.99	2.99
	51.33	58.37	61.60

Clothing Component for Female Adult

Items Lasting One Year	Parys	Kroonstad	Kimberley
1/3 overcoat (one over 3 years)	2.66	4.33	5.98
3 Dresses	20.97	14.97	21.00
1 Skirt	2.69	4.95	2.99
1 Short-sleeved blouse	1.99	4.29	1.75
2 Pairs of shoes	4.98	5.18	6.00
2 Pairs of panties	0.50	0.90	0.78
2 Vests	0.90	0.78	1.18
2 Brassieres	1.98	1.98	1.98
1 Petticoat	0.59	0.69	0.99
1 Summer nightgown	2.99	2.29	2.76
1 Jersey	2.99	4.49	4.99
3 Pairs of stockings	1.17	1.17	1.17
2 Head scarves	0.98	0.78	0.78
	42.40	46.80	52.35

6/Cost of

10.

significantly higher death rates from these diseases than Johannesburg, which is used as the 'control' area.

African Death Rates from Socio-Economic Diseases (1970)

	Johannesburg	Kroonstad
Death rate per 1 000 population from gastro-enteritis	0.713	2.31
Death rate per 1 000 population from malnutrition	0.169	0.53
Death rate per 1 000 population from pneumonia and bronchitis	0.769	1.81

Infant mortality rates are a further indicator of poverty conditions, and again the rates in Kroonstad are significantly higher: 135.74 per 1 000 infants born, compared to 95.48 in Johannesburg.

DAVID HEMSON,
RESEARCH & ADMINISTRATIVE
OFFICER.

dh/fm.

March 1973.

MONTHLY COST OF FOOD COMPONENT - KROONSTAD

TABLE 3.

ITEMS	PRICE/UNIT	CENTS PER GRAM OR MILLI- LITRE	Very Active Man	Mod. Active Man	Mod. Active Woman	Child less than 4	Child 4-6	Child 7-9	Child 10-12	Boy 13-15	Boy 16-20	Girl 13-15	Girl 16-20	OR INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION	
														11	12
Skimmed milk powder	39c / 500g	.078	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.33	1.33	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66		
Meat/Fish	101c / kg	.101	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72		
Dried Beans/Peas	22c / 500g	.044	1.50	0.75	0.75	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75		
Potatoes	90c / 6150g	.015	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36		
Fresh Vegetables	17c / kg	.017	1.16	1.16	1.16	0.58	0.58	0.87	0.87	1.16	1.16	1.16	1.16		
Margarine	9c / 250g	.036	0.46	0.31	0.31	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.23	0.31	0.46	0.31	0.31		
Oil	43c / 750g	.057	0.49	0.24	0.24	-	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.24	0.36	0.12	0.12		
Brown Bread	11c / 900g	.011	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.28	0.47	0.56	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.82		
Mealie Meal	83c / 5kg	.017	2.31	1.16	0.72	0.43	0.58	0.72	0.87	1.16	1.74	1.16	0.87		
Samp/Mealie Rice	10c / kg	.010	0.51	0.34	0.51	0.09	0.09	0.17	0.34	0.43	0.43	0.17	0.17		
Sugar	44c / 2.5kg	.018	0.61	0.31	0.31	0.15	0.15	0.31	0.31	0.46	0.46	0.31	0.31		
Coffee/Tea	140c / kg	.140	0.59	0.30	0.30	-	-	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17		
Salt	11c / kg	.011	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05		
			11.58	8.52	8.25	5.14	5.60	6.87	7.53	10.80	10.14	8.26	8.47		

MARCH 1973 R

OR INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION

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FOSATU's living wage campaign




- actual expenditure
- not a bare minimum needed for life
- no figures
- equal pay
- critique against PDL
- used in negotiations with multinationals

Challenging calculations

PRICE COMPARISONS ON THE HSL CLOTHING BASKET

TABLE 18.

<u>MALES</u>				<u>FEMALES</u>			
ITEMS	HSL PRICE	O.K. BAZAARS	% DIFF.	ITEMS	HSL PRICE	O.K. BAZAARS	% DIFF.
1/3 OVERCOAT	9.35			1/3 COAT	9.35		
1 SPORTS JACKET	25.95	49.99	92,6	3 COTTON DRESSES	19.31	23.97	24,1
2 PRS. TROUSERS	21.31	25.98	21,9	1 SKIRT	6.23	11.99	92,5
2 PRS. WALKING SHOES	14.54	25.98	78,7	1 BLOUSE	6.23	5.99	- 4,0
4 SHIRTS (LONG)	21.31	34.36	61,2	2 PRS. SHOES	12.46	12.98	4,2
2 PRS. UNDERPANTS	3.43	3.70	7,9	2 PRS. PANTS	1.64	2.18	32,9
2 VESTS	4.06	5.78	42,4	2 VESTS	2.89	5.18	79,2
1 PULLOVER	8.31	7.99	4,0	2 BRA'S	2.89	4.98	72,3
3 PR. SOCKS	4.46	4.47	0,2	1 PETTICOAT	3.11	2.99	- 4,0
1 PR. PYJAMAS	7.89	10.99	39,3	1 NIGHTIE	4.16	8.99	116,1
UMBRELLA		3.49		1 JERSEY	6.23	11.99	92,5
				3 PRS. STOCKINGS	1.24	1.47	18,6
				2 HEAD SCARVES	2.06	3.98	93,2
				RAINCOAT		8.99	



After the second minimum standard moment in South Africa

- ethnographic methods
- oral history
- documenting with photographs



Making data comparable

- historicise and contextualize the data
- who and for which purpose has the data been collected?
- who and for which purpose has the data been used over time?
- which conflicts and silences have been part of the process of creating and using the material?