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Wage Increase for Miners

The Chamber of Mines has announced increases in basic wage rates for Black miners. Minimum starting pay for novice underground workers in gold mines and collieries goes up from R1.20 to R1.60 a shift from December 1st. The starting rate for surface workers goes up from R1.00 to R1.20 a shift.

This is the fourth recent increase in minimum wages and the rate for underground novices will have more than tripled in 18 months. The Chamber says the increases paid to those earning above the minimum are likely to be substantial.

The rapid succession of pay increases is in accordance with the mining industry's policy of increasing earnings and making the mining industry more attractive and competitive with other sectors. The Chamber announced that an intensive, three-week radio campaign on Radio Bantu is to be launched as part of a drive to recruit 50,000 Black South Africans a year to the mines. At present 78% of the total Black labour force in the mines is recruited from neighbouring countries (see table p. 3131).

The new wage rates were a compromise settlement by South Africa's seven mining houses. The more progressive houses, led by Anglo American and including Johannesburg Consolidated Investments (JCI) and General Mining pressed for considerably more, talking of more than R2 a shift which was eventually whittled down to R1.80. This move was strongly opposed by Gold Fields (the only group controlled from London) and Anglovaal who put in a bid for R1.50. The compromise figure of R1.60 was eventually agreed to.

(FG 25/10, FMJ 25/10)