

The Priority Of Creating Employment

READERS' LETTERS

NAMDEB Diamond Corporation (Pty) Ltd operates an opencast diamond mine on the west coast of Namibia and is jointly owned by the Government of the Republic of Namibia and De Beers Centenary AG. The mine is situated at Oranjemund and is the largest private sector employer in Namibia. In order to maintain this prominent position in the economy, we have access to some of the best technology in Southern Africa.

Our employees and their families live in Oranjemund where the working environment at NAMDEB is informal and the lifestyle is relaxed. Crime rate is low, rush-hour is non-existent, and recreational, shopping, medical and school facilities are excellent. We now wish to appoint a

Mine Standards Officer

Applicants must have a Grade 12 education, completed a recognised trade test and a minimum of four years experience at Foreman level. Knowledge of the Stores MAT and PUR systems is a requirement with AMCAT and PC skills will be an added advantage. The incumbent is required to have a sound knowledge of quality control principles and the ability to carry out analytical work as required. The Management of Salvage operations also currently forms part of the duties of the Standard Officer.

The package will include: • attractive salary • 13 days leave • suitable married accommodation • board for employees • bonus cheque equal to 10% of annual salary • subsidised primary and secondary education • medical aid • the Company's own Provident Fund and De Beers Pension Fund • assistance with relocation expenses.

Interested persons should send their curriculum vitae, certified copies of their qualifications and a recent photograph to:

Mr. J. H. van der Merwe, Human Resources Manager, NAMDEB, P.O. Box 100, Oranjemund, Namibia.

For more information, please contact Mr. J. H. van der Merwe on (054) 56198.

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SOUTH African colonial rule was characterised by discrimination against blacks whether under the segregation policies of the United Party or the apartheid policies of the National Party.

Discrimination affected all aspects of life, but especially the workplace where jobs in the Post Office, Railways and State Corporations were reserved for white, while blacks were concentrated in unskilled jobs and were excluded from all managerial positions in the private and public sectors.

But it must also be stressed that discrimination affected blacks differently. It was mostly blacks in the Police Zone who experienced discrimination while blacks outside it, by contrast, had few experiences of discrimination especially in the workplace. Also, for different reasons, some groups were completely excluded from the job market; others participated as contract labourers; some blacks had access to certain workplaces and others not. In addition, the situation did not remain static. Especially after 1980 many blacks moved into jobs which had previously been closed to them.

So by the time of independence in 1990 the job situation was a complex one. It was not a simple black/white division and this complexity in the job market has increased during the past eight (8) years.

It is because of these different experiences of blacks in the job market and its present complexity that it is virtually impossible to implement affirmative action without doing injustice to different groups and individuals.

Today many blacks occupy top positions in the civil service and parastatals. But it is in the private sector that there appears to be little progress. The current Affirmative Action Bill therefore, seems to be directed at correcting the situation in this sector.

If the aim of the Affirmative Action is merely to put blacks in managerial positions in the private sector then this Bill will probably achieve this goal. But we must also warn that such an approach is likely to create a great deal of animosity at workplaces. There are several reasons for this. Under the Bill, "blacks" are to get preferential treatment for jobs. But who are included and who are excluded as blacks? What is more, the State will have to resort to apartheid-type mechanisms to determine who is black and who is not.

It will have to issue race-based ID cards, have a Race Register, a Race Classification Board, a Race Appeals Board and Race Commissioners. Not only will this create animosity between those included and those excluded, but such a race classification system would be clearly unconstitutional.

Furthermore, a system of preferences will promote conflict not only between black women and white, but also within the black group, for example, between black men and black women as the latter would receive preferential treatment even where a black man had superior qualifications or experience.

A further cause of conflict stems from the authoritarian thrust of the Bill - from the severe penalties imposed on employers to the stipulation that the Minister determine which is a "relevant employer".

As we stated earlier, if the aim of affirmative action in Namibia is to place blacks in well-paid, managerial positions then this Bill will probably achieve this goal. But the PSUN believes that the challenge facing Namibia today is to create employment for thousands of unskilled men and women and for matriculants and university graduates. We believe that the Bill will do little to create employment. It is the Private Sector which creates real jobs and an affirmative action programme as proposed under this Bill is more likely to destroy than create jobs. As far as managerial positions in the private sector are concerned, we support an approach similar to that in the United Kingdom. The positive action programmes in the UK assists candidates from disadvantaged communities. But when it comes to appointment and promotions then these are based on merit, not preferential treatment. We know from our experience in the public sector what affirmative action means in practice. Many people have been appointed to managerial positions without the necessary qualifications and experience.

The result is that the public sector is today characterised by inefficiency and even chaos. The Wascom report supports this view. It describes public sector management euphemistically as "completely flaccid" (p47). We would use much stronger language.

There is much that the Government can do to create jobs.

It can declare Katutura, Khomasdal, Tseiblaagte, Mondesa and all the other townships EPZs thereby encouraging businesses both local and foreign to locate there. It should then grant them a wide range of tax holidays and other incentives. In this way, businesses would be attracted to these dormitory towns and create jobs for their residents.

But it can do more than this.

What, for example, prevented the Government from building its new Government offices in the area between Khomasdal and Katutura instead of in town? And what would have prevented it from requiring that residents of Khomasdal and Katutura be given first preference for jobs in those offices?

Such a programme would have benefited persons living in apartheid created townships. It would not have benefited a racial group thereby making the programme unconstitutional.

A second thing the Government can do, is to promote law and order in these townships. It should spend money on building police stations and courts so that the property of poor people is protected. In this way poor people will create work for themselves knowing that they will not be robbed of their property.

Thirdly, the Government must actively promote a national culture of discipline, self-help, self-reliance and initiative. There is a widespread belief that to succeed you need to be devious, scheming, opportunistic and know the Minister or know someone who knows the Minister. The result is that people with no managerial or even work experience have been given top positions in the public sector and when they mess-up there they blithely hop to an even higher parastatal job.

The above three things the Government could do without resorting to affirmative action. Affirmative action would be a defensive mechanism. If the Government built courts and police stations in townships and critics accused it of discrimination it would defend itself by saying it was helping disadvantaged areas, not a particular racial group.

For black people to make progress we need development not affirmative action. We need to develop a culture of hard work, discipline, competence, productivity and respect. This is a myth.

The problems with affirmative action are numbered. In America, the home of affirmative action, even blacks are beginning to turn against it. In his autobiography, Days of Grace, the great Arthur Ashe described affirmative action as "Philosophically, intellectually ... just about indefensible". Another black, Ward Connerly, a self-made millionaire warns young blacks that they have to compete in a world that will not give them any compassion. What we need to do is to revert to affirmative action's original purpose - that of enforcing equal opportunity. This means we must outlaw discrimination in the workplace. The PSUN proposes specific pieces of legislation to outlaw sex discrimination, racial and ethnic discrimination and discrimination against the disabled. In addition, we call on the Government to accede to international Labour Organisation Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958, (No. 111).

But more importantly, we need the kind of development that will ensure enduring power. We need to inculcate in the black community the kinds of attitudes, values and behaviour that have made other oppressed communities succeed. This is not an easy task. But the PSUN stands ready to give its support to achievement this goal and we know that with the support of the Government, employers, the churches, schools and parents, black people in Namibia can also succeed.

ARTHUR PICKERING
PRESIDENT - PSUN

INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 1997

1997 1996

	1997 N\$	1996 N\$
Revenue	360 139	338 753
Cost of sales	103 321	21 386
Gross profit	463 460	360 139
Operating expenses	216 000	-
Operating profit	679 460	360 139
Other income	379 970	42 317
Investments	7 664	6 590
Current assets	354 736	162 208
Accounts receivable	77 834	181 824
Cash at bank	432 570	344 032
Current liabilities	(140 744)	(32 800)
	679 460	360 139