

MAGODINI, GEORGE

<Stuart took down forty notebook pages, all written in Zulu, of statements made by Magodini about some of his experiences as a merchant seaman after he had joined a ship in Durban early in 1922. These notes are dated October 1924: as Stuart had left South Africa in 1922 his interviews with Magodini were presumably held in London after the latter's arrival there in September 1924 in the course of one of his voyages. Most of Magodini's account consists of unimportant anecdotes; we here reproduce in translation the only passages of historical value - eds.>

<9.10.1924>

File 59, nbk. 36, p. 5.

- 5 *London is not a good place as there is no work to be had there. There are many people living there who have been unable to find any kind of work at all for two or three years. There is no work for black people in the city. Blacks can find work only on ships. I do not know why it is that there is no work in the city. White people there are in distress as they have no place to stay. They simply wander from place to place and cannot find work.*

<10.10.1924>

File 59, nbk. 36, pp. 26-8.

- 26 *It is difficult to get a job on a ship because there are not many openings. This is because the work is well paid. The captain does not want a man who has no experience on ships, because he will become seasick and be unable to do any work. It will be clear that this is no good. The captain wants a man who has seaman's papers, who has had previous experience. The situation in England is difficult, unlike that in Natal. In Natal one can get a job on a ship; here in England you pay a tax to the government if you want work on a ship, for the ships belong to the government, and there are few jobs available. In England there is work available on ships for black people, but there is no work for them in the towns. This does not apply only to blacks, for there are many whites who cannot find work.*
- 27 *Jobs on ships are taken by Indians, for they work for low pay. There are more Indians than Africans doing this work. The whites prefer them because they work for low pay. They see that if they employ Africans or whites they will lose, for these people want high pay.*
Work on ships is only irregularly available. Africans like it because it is well paid, but it is uncertain work because it comes to an end. This sort of work is good when jobs are available, but it

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causes difficulty because it comes to an end.

Blacks here in England have begun a practice which has not yet been taken up by the whites. When a ship arrives they go to the agent to buy work from him. They go to the captain on the ship and say, 'We want to buy work.' The captain says, 'Have you got money?' They reply, 'We have.' Then they go inside with the captain and hand over money to him. Then he calls the chief engineer and tells him that whites cannot work, that the work is too much for them. This is how blacks set about getting work.