

VIETNAM

ECONOMIC PLANNING, TRADE, AND FINANCE

READER SUGGESTS INSURANCE FOR SALARIED PEOPLE'S WAGES

Ho Chi Minh City SAIGON GIAI PHONG in Vietnamese 29 May 96 p 1

[Letter by Pham Van Chan, from the Southern Branch of the Institute for Communications Planning: "Insuring the Value of the Workers' Wage"]

[Text] The livelihood of the salaried person is presently a matter deserving thought and needing an urgent and basic solution. Right after the new wage policy, every salaried individual felt encouraged because his living conditions had partially improved and because he could devote his full energy to production without major concerns.

Not for long. A couple of months later, although the state had taken many measures to stamp out price hikes, prices unceasingly went up, the value of the wages decreased, and the plunge continued unabated. As things look nowadays, this situation cannot be overcome overnight. Each of us knows that for a couple with two children, with a monthly salary of 700 dong and with the existing prices and living conditions, their living standards are quite low, although the state insures the prices of some commodities and gives a price discrepancy allowance. Compared with prices when the currency change took place, current prices are three to four times higher, excluding certain commodities such as metal and electrical products and machines, whose price increases are even higher. Salaried people's standards of living consequently go down. The worker cannot live uniquely on rationed commodities and has other needs that can be met only by his salary. One may explain that since the country is in difficulty and its economy still underdeveloped, he must make a sacrifice and be patient. This could not be more true. We must live with our modest means and be thrifty, but the people cannot help wondering why the gross national product has gone down three to four times since the issuance of the new wage policy? Isn't that true that realities have shown that distribution among the various strata is still unequal?

Price hikes are detrimental primarily to the salaried people who contribute the most for the production of material and spiritual property for society. Therefore, ensuring the stabilization of their lives is not only a need of production but is also a just task.

In the face of this situation, I warmly recommend that we find a certain way to ensure the value of the workers' salary. At present, it is the state's policy to insure the workers' savings by the price of rice; therefore, why can't